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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7633rd meeting

Friday, 26 February 2016, 10.10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ramírez Carreño	(Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of))
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would like to begin its intervention by publicly thanking all Council members and their delegations for their support during our presidency for the month of February. We would also like to publicly thank all members of the staff of the secretariat of the Security Council, in particular Mr. Movses Abelian, as well as the interpreters, technicians and other support staff for their full cooperation during our presidency.

The month of February has been one of intense work. We are ready to hand over the presidency on 29 February at midnight, as is the custom, to our brother, the representative of Angola. Over the month, we promoted our work in a constructive and transparent fashion, holding more than 21 meetings of different formats. That number includes three debates, two of which were open to all Members of the United Nations. Twenty consultations were held, and six resolutions, seven press statements and one note by the President were adopted. In addition, within the framework of consultations, we considered 14 updates under the item "Other business".

With regard to the debates held this month, we would like to begin with the debate held on 11 February (see S/PV.7620) on the working methods of the subsidiary organs of the Security Council, in particular those of the sanctions committees. That was a very valuable meeting on the dynamics of the Security Council. It allowed us, for the first time, to hear those countries that are currently or have been subject to United Nations sanctions regimes, and to the Chairs and former Chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council, in particular the sanctions committees, as well as those countries that participated in the 2015 high-level review of United Nations sanctions.

The outcome of that debate was the adoption of a note (S/2016/170) by the President of the Security Council on the work of the subsidiary organs of the Security Council, which was distributed on 22 February. In that note, Council members committed to the implementation of a number of measures.

The first is to improve the transparency of the subsidiary organs of the Security Council, including by encouraging all Chairs to provide non-members of the Council with interactive briefings, as appropriate, and to consider any other possibilities for non-members to provide input to their work. It also includes encouraging all Chairs to continue to brief the Council in open meetings, including on relevant reports, as appropriate; and encouraging them, as appropriate, to provide an agreed brief summary of the relevant meetings of the subsidiary organs of the Council to non-members of the Council, including through press releases. Moreover, it includes requesting the Secretariat to announce all meetings and provisional agendas of the subsidiary organs of the Council to the public in the *Journal of the United Nations* and on the websites of the subsidiary organs, and encouraging all Chairs to seek the views of affected or concerned Member States and to foster early and periodic engagement and dialogue between them and the relevant sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels of experts throughout the course of their mandate. It includes, furthermore, encouraging all Chairs to continue to travel periodically to regions applicable to their work to seek the views of, and engage with, affected or concerned States and explain and promote the objectives of the subsidiary organ's mandate. The Secretariat will be encouraged to maintain the translation of all United Nations sanctions lists into all of the official languages of the United Nations, and to continue to ensure that the information on the websites of the subsidiary organs of the Council is accurate and updated in all of the official languages of the United Nations, including the reports of sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels.

The second measure is to improve the process of the selection of Chairs by, inter alia, undertaking an informal process with the participation of all Council members with regard to appointing the Chairs of the subsidiary organs in a balanced, transparent, efficient and inclusive way. The measure also includes encouraging the early appointment of Chairs of subsidiary bodies. To that end, members of the Council will start the informal process of consultations referred to in the note (S/2012/937) by the President of the Security Council of 17 December 2012 as early as possible after each election of members of the Council.

Thirdly, improvement will also be made to preparing the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies. To that end, the note recognizes the support the Secretariat provides to the incoming Chairs and asks it to consider adopting other measures to provide incoming Chairs and their staff with additional substantive information, including on methodology, on the work of the relevant subsidiary body. Outgoing chairs would be encouraged to provide information to incoming Chairs, in writing and orally, on the work carried out during their chairmanship. The note also encourages the holding of timely consultations between the incoming Chairs and the teams, expert groups and related groups responsible for overseeing sanctions.

Fourthly, the note encourages improving the interaction and coordination among the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council and between the subsidiary bodies and the Council as a whole. That includes, among other things, that all Chairs will be encouraged, in particular those presiding over subsidiary bodies covering similar themes and geographic areas, to meet regularly to discuss common problems, improve best practices and enhance mutual cooperation, and to request the Secretariat to provide support to those meetings. Moreover, members of the Security Council will be encouraged to promote greater coordination between the Council as a whole and its subsidiary bodies when thematic issues or situations involving specific countries are considered.

Fifthly, Council members are encouraged to continue to consider how to improve the work of its subsididary bodies.

Venezuela expresses its satisfaction at having promoted that particular debate aimed at improving the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies in terms of transparency, coordination and democracy.

We would also like to mention the open debate (see S/PV.7621) on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as a basic element for the maintenance of international peace and security. At that meeting, held on 15 February, more than 70 representatives of Member and Observer States participaed, with our Minister for Foreign Affairs presiding. Member and Observer States expressed their opinions with regard to the observance and respect of the purposes and principles of the Charter. They stated that in order to ensure international peace and security, greater efforts needed to be exerted to promote the purposes and principles of the Charter, including respect for its provisions. The purposes and principles — including sovereignty, the equality of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity and independence of other countries — are the basic and essential elements to ensure the full application of the Charter of the United Nations. And they are essential elements for peaceably resolving conflicts, thus becoming the path to ensuring international peace and security.

In similar fashion, we were unambiguous in emphasizing that attacks on the sovereignty of States, interference in the internal affairs of States, the promotion and resort to war as a tool of foreing policy, among other actions, constituted a threat to the peaceful coexistence of nations. Many of the statements delivered underscored the importance of resort to the measures set out in Article 33 of the Charter and the need for States abstain from applying coercive measures to conflict situations that did not represent a threat to international peace and security. Also emphasized was the role of regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security. Participants also called for developing synergies between such organizations and the United Nations to that end.

The second open debate (see S/PV.7629) held during our presidency focused on post-conflict peacebuilding and the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. We believe that the statements and observations made during the meeting will inform the ongoing discussions at the United Nations on how to improve the response of the Organization to preventing conflicts, rebuilding States and ensuring lasting peace. Some of the main conclusions of the debate included the need to bear in mind the fact that peacekeeping activities, aimed at ensuring the outbreak, re-emergence and continuation of war, require medium- and long-term measures to help societies immersed in conflict or emerging from one.

Participants reiterated that peacebuilding required the sustained political and financial support of the United Nations over a prolonged period, even after peacekeeping operations are no longer deployed. In that regard, it is crucial to overcome social and economic problems, provide people with a way to make a living and lay the foundation for broad-based and inclusive economic growth — the latter being a fundamental element of any peacebuilding process.

We also noted that the review of the peacebuilding architecture currently taking place in the Security Council and the General Assembly required that we looked at peacebuilding with a broader perspective and greater determination. What we need now is a new mindset, not just with regard to the architecture itself but also the entire focus of peacebuilding as carried out by the United Nations. Participants also focused on the need to make greater progress on cooperation on peacebuilding between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

Furthermore, with regard to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, it is important to point out that on 7 February Council members held closed consultations on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's launch of a missile carrying a ground observation satellite. That launch entailed the use of ballistic missile technology, in violation of existing sanctions. Council members unanimously condemned that event via a press release, which underscored that the launch, as well as any other carried out by that country using ballistic missile technology, was a violation of resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013) and 2094 (2013). Council members reiterated their intention to develop significant additional measures through a draft resolution in response to the missile launch and the nuclear test conducted by North Korea on 6 January.

In addition, during our presidency of the Council we also paid particular attention to the issue of Palestine. We did so based on the demand by the majority of the international community that the Council, consistent with the its responsibilities under the Charter with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security, play a proactive role to address the question of Palestine with determination and a sense of justice. In that regard, we held three rounds of consultations under the tiem "Other matters" to discuss that issue. The lack of political will on the part of some actors to resolve the question of Palestine in the Security Council has to date prevented the reaching of a definitive solution to the more than 60-year-old conflict. We regret that the calls by the Security Council to put an end to the illegal occupation and the violations of human rights law and international law by the occupying Power against the inhabitants of the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as for the parties to go to the negotiating table, have not led to concrete actions to resolve that complex situation.

On 25 February, we considered in consultations the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories — the West Bank and Gaza — with particular emphasis on the children who are victims of that tragic reality. That was the first time that Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, addressed that issue at the Council, during which he spoke of the lack of basic services, medicines, food and freedoms — all the result of the economic blockade, siege, policy of expanding illegal settlements and, especially, the military aggression by the occupying Power, which has led to the deaths of so many civilians in recent decades.

With regard to the conflict in Yemen, the Security Council considered the situation on two occasions, on 16 and 17 February (see S/PV.7622 and S/PV.7625). The dire reality being endured by this Arab country ever since the conflict started in March last year clearly demonstrates that conflicts cannot be settled with weapons but with a peaceful, negotiated political settlement. In that regard, we continue to call for an end to the fighting, including aerial bombings that have led to loss of civilian life and a speedy deterioration of the humanitarian situation in this brother country.

That is why we believe that it is critical to honour the agreements made during the talks held in December 2015 in Switzerland, in particular with regard to the establishment of a climate of mutual trust to defuse tensions and thereby ensure better results in talks on a peace agreement. The meeting held on 16 February on the humanitarian situation in Yemen was an opportunity for Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien to deliver a briefing on the humanitarian situation in the country. Mr. O'Brien's detailed briefing was particularly useful for updating Council members on the humanitarian dimension of the conflict in Yemen, which, according to information given during the meeting, regrettably shows that the situation is far from encouraging.

In conclusion, the situation in Syria was addressed seven times by the Security Council during this month and covered the political environment, chemical weapons and the humanitarian situation. In that regard, the Council continued to closely monitor the peace talks, paying special attention to the outcome of the Munich conference on 11 February, during which major agreements were reached on the ceasefire to start on 27 February, Damascus time. We hope that the Council will lend its strong support to the initiative. In that regard, we are awaiting the adoption of a draft resolution to be submitted to the Council for consideration in the next few hours, and will assist in finding a peaceful political solution to the armed conflict. It requires effort, dedication and determination from the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, in such an important mission.

We are leaving the presidency of the Council with the belief that we have made our best effort to promote the cause of justice and international peace and security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the other members of the Council.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to you, Sir, and the Venezuelan delegation for the skilful and effective way in which you have fulfilled presidential functions in February. This month was extremely busy because of the heavy work programme proposed by the presidency and because of events developing quickly around the world. The Security Council must still hold some key meetings. Therefore, today's wrap-up session can only be interim in nature.

We would like to point out in particular the meeting (see S/PV.7621) presided over by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, Ms. Delcy Eloína Rodríguez Gómez. At a time when a clear understanding of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its inviolable nature are often lacking, we consider it necessary to clearly reconfirm our common commitment to such provisions, to which there is no alternative. We cannot close our eyes to what is taking place today as a result of the flagrant interference in the internal affairs of many States, through supporting illegal regime change or the violent implanting of alien cultural or social norms. The Council is aware of such examples, and we dwelt on this subject in detail during the meeting on 15 February. Discussions on the principles of the Charter are directly related to all issues discussed within these walls and, on the basis of the Charter, we must agree on the ways in which we will implement joint risk management in the context of ever-more difficult international relations. Without respect for the founding principles, this will not be successful.

It was a particularly difficult time with regard to many issues in the Security Council this month. To a large extent, that was related to the challenging tasks we faced and the difficult political nature of the issues we have been considering. However, we would like to point out some issues in which compromise was not reached because of the unwillingness of many delegations to sacrifice their narrow national ambitions for the sake of the common good. For example, for the second time we have not been able to agree on a press statement on the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. Despite the fact that, generally, there is no doubt in anyone's mind regarding the importance of United Nations cooperation with regional organizations, on several occasions some delegations have refused to recognize the cooperation of the Regional Centre with organizations that are making a genuine contribution to peace and stability in the region. The Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are clear examples of the double standards we regrettably encounter in the Security Council.

The discussion on extending sanctions in Darfur cannot be deemed productive either. The authors of the resolution abused their position and tried unceremoniously to impose their national priorities on the text, attempting to restrict entire sectors of that country's economy. By hiding behind good intentions to establish peace in Darfur and arbitrarily interpreting the recommendations of the sanctions experts, the authors have tried to put pressure on Khartoum, depriving it of its main source of income. However, they fully ignored the views of other delegations on this matter. Such a tactic undermines the unity in the Security Council. As a result, we had to have a particularly technical extension of the sanctions resolution, putting to a vote last year's text.

The document that was adopted did not include extremely important wording, including as proposed by the Russian delegation, to condemn violations of the arms embargo by illegal armed groups, the recruitment of child soldiers by rebels and attacks on peacekeepers, or an appeal for the complete, as opposed to a selective, implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. We hope that this negative experience will be taken into account when we vote on other draft resolutions in the Security Council.

At the centre of global politics and the Council's work programme in February was the situation in the Middle East, and first and foremost in Syria. It is not surprising given the number of significant agreements that were reached this month, and we worked intensively with the Council keeping its finger on the pulse. The new trend, if it is exploited responsibly, will make it possible to hope for an early resumption of inter-Syrian negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, as they were forced to come to an artificial pause at the beginning of the month because of the unwillingness on the part of the Syrian opposition to take part in constructive talks. We hope that the grave blunder that such groups were allowed to make by putting forward preconditions will not be repeated.

Close attention was paid to the humanitarian situation prevailing for a number of years because of the conflict and the terrorist movements that have struck that country. We firmly repeat that humanitarian issues must be considered in a comprehensive way without unnecessary politicization, which does not help the Syrians who are suffering. The situation continues to be difficult, but we did bring this month to a close with promising progress in that area, which became possible, including because of Russia's efforts. On two occasions at the Security Council, our delegation raised the issue of the continuing violations of Syrian sovereignty by Turkey, which are fraught with the risk of an escalation of that conflict. We hope that that signal will be received and understood by those to whom it is addressed and by those who sponsor them. The publication of the first report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism to investigate the use of chemical weapons was another important moment. In our view, in the light of new facts regarding the use by terrorists of poisonous substances in Syria and Iraq and evidence of the free movement of such chemicals in the region, the importance of the mechanism will increase and the geographical scope of its mechanism will broaden.

In conclusion, we would like to wish the Venezuelan presidency a successful completion of its work this month. In a couple of hours, we will meet to discuss a draft resolution that is crucial to a settlement in Syria on the adoption of a joint statement by the co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group on the cessation of hostilities. On Monday, we will discuss cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

Right now, however, I would like to take this opportunity to wish the incoming Angolan presidency every success in carrying out its important functions.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): I would first like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Venezuela, on the way in which you have conducted the work of the Council in February. It has been a very busy and productive month. You have already discussed the Council's activities this month in detail, Mr. President, so my statement will be short and focused.

We commend the coherence of Venezuela's programme of work through its promotion of debates on crucial issues of fundamental relevance to the Security Council's work, such as general issues related to sanctions and the working methods of the Council's subsidiary bodies; respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; and the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. I intend to highlight those thematic issues, considering their importance within both the general and the specific areas of work of the Council.

The debate (see S/PV.7620) on working methods and general issues related to sanctions was an important contribution to efforts to further clarify that very sensitive issue. We commend the determination and perseverance of the Venezuelan delegation in issuing its concept note (S/2016/102, annex) on the subject, to which you referred at length, Mr. President, and which included pertinent and useful provisions regarding improvements on, among other things, transparency; selecting and preparing the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies; and the interaction and coordination between those bodies and the Council itself. Considering that the Security Council makes extensive use of sanctions regimes as an important tool in its attempts to restrict, impose specific changes in behaviour or deter individuals or entities in certain States who are regarded as threats to international peace and security, the sanctions committees will continue to play a substantive role as a strong political tool for the Council. Such powers involve the ability to enforce sanctions regimes and a constant need to ensure their improvement, particularly in their decision-making processes, adoption, targeting and enforcement and also in their lifting.

Another important moment in this month's programme was the debate (see S/PV.7621) on respect for the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, which represented an opportunity for the entire membership of the United Nations to reiterate its attachment to them. In expressing the principled commitment of the Organization to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations, achieving international cooperation in solving international problems and becoming a centre for harmonizing the actions taken by countries, the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter have become pillars of international law, establishing a system of collective security that, despite setbacks, has made the United Nations the main front in the struggle over the past 70 years to achieve a more peaceful world, based on respect for international law, human rights and cooperation among all peoples and nations, with the ultimate aim of strengthening universal peace.

The founding of the United Nations and the adoption of its Charter were remarkable achievements for the international community. The Charter's principles on the sovereign equality of all States and their duty to fulfil their obligations in good faith; the peaceful settlement of disputes; non-interference in other countries' internal affairs; refraining from the use or threat of use of force; and solidarity with preventive or enforcement action directed at any State by the United Nations have become pillars of international relations and common wisdom. However, the reality is far from rosy, and we continue to witness violations of those principles that constitute a major threat to international peace and security.

The third debate (see S/PV.7629) held this month discussed the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture currently under way. It gave Member States an opportunity to express their views on this crucial issue at a time when negotiations are being conducted on a draft resolution on the subject, its links to conflict prevention and the need for the United Nations to strengthen its capacity in the area.

The report (see S/2015/490) of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture points out that, on the peace agenda, peacebuilding is seen as a logical follow-up to peacekeeping and peacemaking, with the main objective of preventing relapses into conflict once peace settlements have been secured. Based on that assumption, two aspects mentioned in the report are particularly relevant — the need for a change in the mindset on the role of peacebuilding in the United Nations system, based on the concept of sustaining peace, and the vision that peacebuilding must aim to prevent the outbreak, recurrence or continuation of armed conflict, and must therefore encompass a wide range of political, development, humanitarian and human-rights programmes and mechanisms. Sustaining peace, according to the report, is a permanent task, before, during and after conflict, and requires that we adjust our approaches to peacebuilding.

With regard to the responsibilities of the United Nations system, and based on the objectives I have just outlined, peacebuilding covers the Organization's three pillars and main organs, whose activity must be better coordinated and harmonized, and more fully devoted to the prevention of armed conflict and maintenance of peace through the promotion of the values and principles enshrined in the Charter. Since, as such, peacebuilding cuts across all United Nations activities, it must be understood as an evolving concept based on the need to constantly adapt to the realities on the ground and to the time frames needed for political transitions in the wake of violent conflict.

We would like to underscore that what is at stake in the current review of the peacebuilding architecture is the entire strategy of the United Nations system for addressing conflict prevention, the root causes of conflict and the creation of sustainably peaceful societies in a context of diversity, challenges and continuing threats to international peace and security.

Finally we would like to once again congratulate Venezuela on its excellent presidency.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I would like to begin, Mr. President, by thanking you and your team for your presidency of the Security Council for what has been a very busy month of February. I expect that the two biggest events of the month, in terms of products that we can agree on, are still ahead of us, and I hope that we will be coming back together to unanimously adopt the very important draft resolution mentioned by the representative of the Russian Federation, which welcomes the cessation of hostilities due to come into effect in Syria and points the way towards the political transition there that is so important for the people of the country and the region. Secondly, I hope we will also be able to come together before the end of the month to agree on a draft resolution on sanctions for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which we discussed in consultations yesterday.

What I thought I might do in today's meeting is to talk about how we work rather than what we work on and, as we have done before, to use the wrap-up session to exchange views on our working methods, all of it with the aim of trying to improve the Council's overall efficiency and effectiveness. Back in November, when we held the presidency, I said there were three adjectives we wanted to have in mind — "interactive", "transparent" and "action-oriented" — and I would like to say a little bit about what we mean by each of those three, in order to see if they can help to improve the Council's overall efficiency and effectiveness.

Starting off on the topic of interactivity, I note that, first of all, that there are two different ways of doing these wrap-up sessions; either we do it formally here, which has the benefit of being a formal meeting of the Council but has the disadvantage of there being no interactivity with the people listening and watching, or we do it in another Chamber, which has the benefit of genuine interactivity. I think that I can say that people are voting with their feet. I counted, I think, 17 people in the red seats. They are all very welcome, and it is great that they are all still awake, just about, but when we did the session informally in one of the other Chambers, we had the vast majority of the 193 members of the General Assembly present, many of them at the Permanent-Representative level. I think that perhaps there is a message there for how we do these wrap-up sessions and increase the overall interactivity between the Council and the rest of the United Nations membership.

But there is also a message about interactivity in terms of how we work with each other, about getting high-quality briefers, about genuinely listening and engaging with them, and about genuinely engaging with each other on the contents of what we are discussing. There is a clear link between the level of engagement or interactivity, on the one hand, and the products that can come out, on the other.

To take a couple of examples from this month, we very much welcome the discussion that the Venezuelan presidency organized on the workings of the subsidiary bodies on 11 February (see S/PV.7620). There was a very thoughtful concept note, which informed the exchange of views (S/2016/102, annex). The United Kingdom did not agree with everything in it, but we thought that it was very well thought through, and it led to an interesting exchange of views. And following the discussion, the Venezuelan presidency worked on a presidential note (S/2016/170), which, again, we welcome very much, to capture the areas of agreement. As a result of the interactivity, the Council was able to agree on this note last week, and we now have a series of specific, concrete, practical suggestions that will, I hope, improve the transparency and outreach of the committees, encourage Chairs to share experience between incoming and outgoing Chairs and across different committees. It was a useful exchange of views; there was some interaction following it and a positive outcome.

On the other hand, we had, as others have mentioned already, an open debate about respecting the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations (see S/PV. 7621), which is an admirable topic for a debate. I naturally strongly agree with those who say that we must uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter. I would just question whether a whole series of 70 statements by 70 different countries over a whole day is actually going to change anyone's mind about such an important issue. It was clear from that debate that it is an interesting issue and that people want to talk about it, but there was absolutely zero interactivity at any point in that debate. I am therefore pretty sure, as a result, that nothing really is going to change, which is a shame because it is an important topic and it was a whole day out of the short month of February. I am not criticizing the topic of the debate. I am just saying that we need to think further about how we build some interactivity into our debates to drive up the level of engagement, which in turn will drive up the usefulness of the product or products that come out of the meetings. That is a little bit about interactivity.

On transparency, everything we do in the Chamber is of course transparent because the cameras are on us, but there are times when need to meet privately. It is very important that we be able to do so, in the Consultations Room. It is incumbent upon us to be transparent in terms of telling the rest of the membership, and indeed the public through the media, that we have had discussions, and broadly speaking what the discussions were about it, what we agreed on, what were the areas of disagreement, what are going to do next. That level of transparency each and every time we have a meeting in the Consultations Room, whether its formal consultations or any other business or anything else, I think that we should try to increase the level of transparency between us and the outside world, as a result of those discussions. If not, then particularly if our debates in this Chamber are very stilted and formal, with no engagement, then people will rightly assume that the real action is happening elsewhere, and I think they need to know a little bit more than they currently do about what that real action looks like.

Thirdly, and finally, I would like to say a little bit about action-oriented debates, consultations and meetings. I am very keen that we do not just have a discussion for the sake of having a discussion. From the statistics that the President mentioned, it is clear that on a couple of topics we have had a very large number of discussions one way or another. Were we really making sure that each and every one of those was action-oriented so that something would actually happen as a result that was different? I am not sure that we can say that, honestly.

We have five "any other business" items. Yesterday, one of them was extremely action-oriented — the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — because the United States and China came forward with a draft resolution, which is extremely welcome. On one of the others — on the Sudan and South Sudan — we had some action in terms of an agreed press element, which the presidency was able to tell the media about, but on the others, as far as I can see, there is actually no action resulting at all, and it seems to me that might something worthy looking at if we are trying improve our overall efficiency and effectiveness.

Those are the three points I wanted to make — the Council needs to be more interactive, transparent and action-oriented. I think these concepts are all linked, in a way, and we can get a better action coming out if we are interactive and transparent. But I hope that people will accept my suggestions in the spirit in which they are intended, which is to be positive and constructive and to improve the overall effectiveness of the Council.

Finally, to wrap up, I just want to thank the President and his team again for a very full and productive month of February. I wish all the very best to the whole of the Angolan delegation and to Movses, who might have left the Chamber — maybe he has had enough already — but I thank him very much on behalf of the Security Council for his work in the role of leading the Secretariat.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank and congratulate the President and his team for their able leadership of the Security Council during the month of February. Our programme of work during the month was busy, with very important issues and considerations. The consensus agreements on draft resolutions regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the cessation of hostilities in Syria were the crowning achievement of all our efforts. We would like to make the following observations on the different issues before the Council this month.

First of all, we would like to comment on the open debate on the working methods of the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council (see S/PV.7620). We welcome the positive results mentioned in the briefing and the publication of the note by the President contained in document S/2016/170 on 22 February. We express our gratitude to the Venezuelan delegation for its initiative in that regard. We stress the importance of this note by the President and the need to have it implemented in practical terms. This is a joint responsibility of the leadership of the subsidiary bodies, their members and their secretariats, particularly in terms of the transparency of the work of these bodies and the need for an objective vision of promoting sanctions regimes as one of the methods available to the Security Council that enhances its credibility and ability to realize the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Secondly, in the open debate in respect of the purposes and principles of the Charter (see S/PV.7621), many countries and groups of countries presented important ideas, particularly in terms of the maintenance of international peace and security. We would like to state the importance of the political will to respect the Charter and its provisions and for the United Nations to bear its responsibility to develop and improve its ability to play its role. Otherwise, it will have to withdraw from the international arena, with reliance on it gradually decreasing.

Thirdly, the open debate on the comprehensive review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture considered a number of important issues, most importantly the prevention of conflict from a political, social and development perspective. The Council thus shouldered its responsibilities in this regard through a commitment to the letter and the spirit of Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, giving precedence to preventive diplomacy and cooperation with regional organizations with a view to the peaceful settlement of disputes. Egypt hopes that these positive ideas will be reflected in the current negotiations on a draft joint resolution of the Council and the General Assembly on the review process.

Fourthly, as concerns Syria, the crisis there was once again at the top of the Council's priorities. The developments we have witnessed recently have been marked by the positive step of having reached an understanding on the cessation of hostilities in Syria. We call on all Syrian and non-Syrian parties to remain committed to this agreement and to the continuation of the Geneva talks, as well as to beginning negotiations between the Syrian Government and the opposition, under the auspices of the United Nations.

Furthermore, while military operations have intensified, members of the Council have witnessed positive developments in terms of access to humanitarian assistance. We encourage all parties to continue to do their utmost to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population and stress once again that the Vienna process for a political settlement, which resulted in the International Support Group as well as the adoption of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), has opened a new and historic window of opportunity for a peaceful settlement in Syria that may not reappear for years.

The Security Council bears the responsibility of guaranteeing the implementation of the plan of action and preserving the consensus of the Council as reflected in its resolution without selectivity or preconditions. Negotiations over a transitional period and access to humanitarian assistance, as well as fighting terrorism, are all parallel tracks that should be approached without delay, taking into account the importance of reaching a political settlement of the crisis as the ideal way to put an end to the suffering of the civilian population and to fight terrorism.

Fifthly, February was also busy with consultations on the question of Palestine, particularly concerning the humanitarian suffering and the continued violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. We would like to reiterate that the question of Palestine is at an extremely delicate stage, since Israeli settlement policies, the confiscation of Palestinian lands and the destruction of their homes have almost destroyed every prospect for a political settlement based on the two-State solution. We have two options: either the international community, including the Security Council, takes action to defend the rights of the Palestinian people and put forward a two-State-based solution, or we should start seriously considering how to deal with a policy of imposing the reality of a one-State solution.

Sixthly, on Burundi, February was also busy with diplomatic efforts with regard to the political crisis in Burundi, following the visit paid by the Council to Bujumbura and Addis Ababa and the visits by the Secretary-General and the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as the high-level delegation of the African Union to Burundi, expressing the concern of the international community and its interest in putting a speedy end to the conflict. However, we would warn against any attempts motivated by a specific vision of the settlement of the crisis and the means of its implementation, as well as of the role of the United Nations and its nature, without consultation with the Burundi Government and members of the peaceful opposition, as well as civil society and the other regional parties concerned.

We believe that the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Conflict Prevention, including in Burundi, should be given the proper mandate to deal with this crisis and to preserve the gains that we have achieved since the Arusha Agreement entered into force. We call on the Security Council to listen to the different views of and assessments by the various parties that have visited Burundi to arrive at a proper strategy to deal with the crisis. We reiterate our readiness to effectively contribute to our consideration of this crisis.

In conclusion, we wish you every success, Mr. President, and we also wish success to the next presidency.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the entire Senegalese delegation, it is my pleasure to convey, through you, to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela our warmest congratulations on a very rich and productive presidency of the Security Council during this, the shortest month of the year, February. It was rich and productive in terms of the number of open meetings and closed consultations, the diversity of the issues debated and the results achieved.

The positive report that you, Sir, have just presented means that I shall not need to touch on a good number of questions. I shall limit myself to recalling the numerous presidential statements, elements to the press and resolutions, which are testimony to our work under your presidency.

Under the presidency of Venezuela, the Security Council has been able to focus its attention on very urgent matters such as the situations in Syria and Yemen and the Korean nuclear issue, but above all we were able to cast light on long-standing but key conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the tragic situation in Palestine.

Mr. President, through the skilful use of the procedures and the agenda of the Security Council, you were able to raise such important issues as the question of the sanctions regime, the role of the Council in improving the peacebuilding architecture and the methods of work of the Security Council. African issues also received attention: Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan, Mali and the Central African Republic, as well as the situation in Guinea-Bissau, on which our Council has just unanimously adopted resolution 2267 (2016).

Mr. President, you were able, through recourse to the values and cultural wealth of your country, to organize a concert by the Venezuelan philharmonic orchestra, showing that the Security Council is made up of States and peoples with shared values.

Coming back to the statement by our friend Matthew of the United Kingdom on the issue of interactivity, transparency and results-oriented actions, I believe that the many other topics that were raised yesterday when we discussed the North Korean nuclear issue and the appointment of the prosecutor of the Residual Mechanism are examples of transparency.

Senegal welcomes the reasserted commitment of the Security Council to support the countries neighbouring Senegal, including, Guinea Bissau, in terms of reconstruction and peacebuilding.

The third lesson that I would like to underscore is that the work we have undertaken this month shows the importance of a strong and ongoing commitment by the Security Council to taking bold initiatives in many crises and encouraging positive momentum with a view to resolving them. It is under your presidency, Sir, that the Council decided to visit West Africa, which will take place next week with a visit to Mali, a neighbouring country of Senegalm to Guinea-Bissau and to Senegal to take account of things with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Office of the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel.

Once again, on behalf of the delegation of Senegal, I would like to reiterate our congratulations to you, Mr. President, and take this opportunity to pay tribute to the leadership that you, Sir, have demonstrated, and which honours your country. I would like to take this opportunity to also wish good luck to the delegation of Angola, which will take the helm in March. I assure it the full support of the Senegalese delegation.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank and congratulate the Ambassador of Venezuela and his entire team for the significant work they have carried out this month and for a very productive presidency. With a smile, you, Mr. President, have imposed on us an intensive programme of work with a record number of items under "Other matters", including four that were discussed yesterday. We thank you, Sir.

We had a busy agenda, but I will address some issues of particular importance, among many others, without mentioning other issues, such as that of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, for example, which we discussed yesterday. I hope we will quickly be able to move to a vote on that matter on the excellent draft resolution that has been put forward.

With regard to Africa, I would like to make a few comments on Burundi and the Central African Republic. The Council's visit at the end of January and the visit of the Secretary-General to Bujumbura on 22 and 23 February helped to strengthen the international community's momentum to demand that the actors in Burundi put an end to violence and begin a true inter-Burundian dialogue without delay. We hope that the high-level visit of the Heads of State of the African Union yesterday and today will help secure concrete commitments, especially from President Nkurunziza, in that regard.

It is essential for us that the Council do everything in its power to avoid a situation in which the Burundi crisis becomes a civil war or worse. The deployment of a United Nations police contingent is a key element in that regard. We regret that an agreement still has not been reached on our draft presidential statement on that subject. We will continue to tirelessly push in that direction with a spirit of responsibility and vigilance to support the efforts of the African Union. Depending on the results of the visit of the African Union Heads of State, we will resume the initiative to support their actions.

With regard to the Central African Republic, we welcome the adoption, on 9 February of resolution 2264 (2016), which increased the number of correctional officers deployed to the United Nations

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), will help to strengthen our fight against impunity. The holding of the presidential election is a real collective success story for people of the Central African Republic, but also for MINUSCA, Operation Sangaris and all those who supported the country's recovery. The electoral process will reach its conclusion and should allow a transition to take place on 31 March. Once the transition is complete, the Security Council must remain seized of the matter to support the Central African Republic to ensure its stability and reconciliation.

I would also like to mention the pressing issue of this day, the question of Syria. France supports a process that will lead to tangible results for the Syrian people, not a process for its own sake. We must only mention the obvious, as recalled by the Secretary-General in his letter of 17 February, that if Syrians do not see any results in their daily lives, negotiations will not be credible and they will remain an abstract — that is, absurd — piece of theatre. That is the guiding principle of our approach and that is why we have consistently condemned attacks against civilians and called for the immediate lifting of all sieges and for permanent, secure and unconditional access for humanitarian assistance to all persons in need.

We also welcomed the cessation of hostilities agreement reached by the United States and Russia, on 12 February, as a significant contribution to the resolution of the Syrian conflict. France will fully support the adoption this afternoon of the draft resolution endorsing the parameters of that cessation of hostilities agreement. However, if the role of the Security Council is to support, without hesitation, anything that can lead to a sustainable reduction in violence, it must also involve an effort to ensure that we have the collective means to fully implement such an initiative.

We must also keep in mind that, although the cessation of hostilities is welcome, it is only a first step in reducing violence. The key will be the ability to achieve, through the inter-Syrian negotiations coordinated by the Special Envoy, the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), as only a real transition will lay the foundation for a real end to the crisis in Syrian.

With regard to the peace process, we hope, with our initiative, to change the status quo — which is in fact a regression that increasingly weakens the two-State solution and which threatens to lead to an explosion on the ground. France is moving forward methodically with its initiative by initially bringing together the members of the International Syria Support Group and, in time, the parties in the framework of an international conference. While we do not believe that the conditions exist for positive action by the Security Council, but we remain determined to ensure that the Council can play the role it should play when the time comes.

We will act in full transparency and in close consultation with all the parties concerned. Our approach is constructive and collective so that we can find a way out of this very harmful situation. We also will seek to build on the efforts of the different partners, in particular the Quartet, whose statement of 12 February is in accordance with our efforts. The appointment of a special high-level envoy, Mr. Pierre Vimont, our former Ambassador to the United States and former Executive Secretary-General of the European External Action Service, will allow us to begin to hold extensive consultations. I will regularly inform the Council of our progress on that front.

With regard to Libya, there have also been a number of significant developments in February. Steps have been taken towards the establishment of a government of national unity. Members of the Presidential Council reached an agreement on 15 February to propose a second, narrower, consolidated list of members of the Government. France, with other partners, welcomed that announcement. While a majority of members in the House of Representatives signed a statement endorsing the Government, this is a decisive moment. The endorsement of that list and the definitive establishment of a Government of national unity are essential to address the worrying humanitarian and economic crises in the country and to confront the threat of Da'esh. We fully supported the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Martin Kobler, in his efforts. We will continue to fully support the political process so that the Government of national unity can be set up as soon as possible. The Security Council consultations that will take place on 2 March are expected to reaffirm our collective support for United Nations mediation and the ongoing process.

Lastly, the briefing of the Council planned for Monday with the participation of the German Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe presents the opportunity to recall the central role played by the United Nations in the resolution of the crisis in Ukraine, as well as the need for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. In that regard, France has regularly recalled that the agreements are the only possible framework for a negotiated solution.

I will conclude by again thanking the Venezuelan presidency and by wishing Angola, which takes over in a few days, the best of luck.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank and congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for its efforts in the presidency this month. I would also like to thank you, Sir, for your comprehensive report on the activities of the Security Council during the month of February.

(*spoke in English*)

Of the many difficult issues that the Council has dealt with in February, I would like to concentrate on three. They include two important crises on which the Council will make important decisions today and, hopefully, tomorrow. One is the nuclear test and ballistic missile launched by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Another is Syria. The third issue that I want to touch upon is the working methods of the Council, on which the President reported at length.

First, on 6 February, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea launched a ballistic missile. After the nuclear test in January, that launch is yet another clear and flagrant violation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of the relevant Security Council resolutions. These are not just violations of Council resolutions, but also totally unacceptable challenges to the Charter of the United Nations. The combination of nuclear and ballistic missile development pursued by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a real threat to the national security of Japan. It also seriously undermines the peace and stability of the region and beyond. Yesterday, a draft resolution was introduced by the United States. That draft resolution is very comprehensive and robust. I would like to express our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Power and her team for taking the lead. My appreciation also goes to China for its efforts. It is now crucial for all of us in the Council to unite in order to adopt a draft resolution as quickly as possible — tomorrow, to be more precise — in order to send a strong message to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The adoption of a new draft resolution is not an end, but a beginning. Resolutions are effective only when fully implemented. Implementation is therefore crucial to changing the policy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with regard to its nuclear and missile development, and to bringing it back to dialogue. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance for all of us to fully implement the obligations contained in the relevant resolutions, including the draft resolution that will be adopted very soon.

The second matter is Syria. With profound regret, I have to point out that five long years have passed since the outbreak of the crisis in Syria. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than a quarter of a million Syrians have been killed, and 4.6 million fled their country during in that time. It is clear that there is no way to end the dire situation of Syrians without a comprehensive political solution. Once again, let me underscore the importance of the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015), unanimously adopted on 18 December 2015. The Council is expected to adopt a new draft resolution today endorsing the recent joint statement of the United States and the Russian Federation on a cessation of hostilities in Syria. The implementation of that new draft resolution will be another responsibility for all of us.

Thirdly, let me mention the working methods. In my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions, I have the pleasure to announce that our first meeting will be convened on 7 March. I am delighted to inherit the significant achievements already made in this field, including the work of Angola as former Chair of the Working Group, the presidential statements issued under the Spanish presidency last October and the most recent presidential note, S/2016/170, issued under the Venezuelan presidency this month.

Japan also took the lead in comparing presidential note S/2010/507 when we last served on the Council. I would like to make a concrete contribution in that area during my chairmanship, building upon the significant achievements to which I just referred. To that end, I seek strong cooperation and support from the members of the Security Council. It is also my intention to continue to listen closely to the voices of the broader membership of the United Nations. In that context, I was very encouraged by the recent discussions held at the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. Many delegations expressed their strong expectations that the Informal Working Group would make further progress on transparency and closer cooperation with the General Assembly. I was very encouraged to hear from Ambassador Matthew Rycroft of the United Kingdom — who is no longer here — who said that the Security Council could benefit greatly from listening to the voices coming from the General Assembly. He did not say the often-quoted phrase that the Security Council is the master of its rules of procedure.

Before concluding my statement, though I do not seem him in the Chamber, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Movses Abelian for his invaluable contribution as Director of the Security Council Affairs Division, and congratulate him on his promotion. I hope my appreciation will be conveyed to him. My only regret is that Movses will be gone when I have the honour to preside over the Council during the month of July.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to the entire Venezuelan team for your tireless work. There are only three days left. I wish Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins — who is also not present — and the Mission of Angola every success in March.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I, too, want to congratulate Venezuela for a very productive and busy month. I will come back to that in a minute.

I want to talk a little about working methods and a little bit about some of the key issues that we have dealt with this month.

On working methods specifically, I want to thank Venezuela for its initiative in convening the discussion on the working methods of the subsidary bodies of the Security Council (see S/PV.7620). We found that to be one of the more interesting discussions we have had in this Chamber. I am sure — in fact, I know from the feedback I have received from other members of the General Assembly — that they also found that exercise to be very useful. What is clear from the debate and the note we have now agreed on (S/2016/170) is that there is room for improvement. We need to work smarter and focus our efforts on discharging our core responsibilities. For our part, New Zealand will continue to strive for a behavioural change in the way subsidiary bodies operate. Focusing on outcomes over adherence to formalistic process would give our work greater meaning.

There are two initiatives in particular that we will look to take forward. The first is to establish a transparent and inclusive process for the appointment of the Chairs of subsidiary bodies. The second one, which I find is particularly relevant to the work to the two Committees that I chair, is to achieve greater coordination between the subsidiary bodies and the wider Council agenda. On that point, I would note that the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is one of the most dangerous situations we deal with in this organ. It is very important that the Council's consideration of that issue be informed by the work of the Security Council Committee concerning ISIL and Al-Qaida.

Therefore, I would encourage everybody who takes part in our subsidiary bodies, whether they be experts or the Ambassadors who chair them — and I would encourage other Ambassadors to participate in the proceedings occasionally, especially the Permanent Members who do not have the privilege of chairing those bodies — to carry forward the spirit of the note we agreed upon in our day-to-day work. We do not need a large overhaul of the system to ensure that our work is effective, but we need to display some common sense.

Turning to the programme of work for February — which, as others have noted, has been a very busy month, one best exemplified by yesterday's marathon effort under "Any other business" — we are a strong supporter of the use of that item as a means of addressing important questions. However, I believe there comes a point when we need to pause and contemplate as how many isues we can cope with in the course of a single meeting. With regard to working methods more generally, I want to pay tribute to what Matthew Rycroft said in his statement. I agreed with all he said about the way we need to structure our work and how we can do better in working together.

As others have also said, one of the most important questions we have touched on this month was yesterday's discussion on sanctions against the Democratic People Republic of Korea. We have been waiting for a product on that for two months. It is to be acknowledged that the working methods through which that product has emerged does not square with our normal preference, but we recognize that it is an unusual situation. We want to pay tribute to the United States of America and

China for the very important work they have done. It is a very important draft resolution. It is different. It sends the important signal that we want to be sending, and so we too are among those who would like it adopted as soon as possible.

On Syria, we can be pleased — perhaps the better word is "relieved" — that some positive progress has been made at long last. The adoption of the cessation of hostilities now provides some hope that a proper peace process can be put in place and that finally peace can be achieved in that country. In the meantime, we are relieved that humanitarian access now seems to be on a sounder footing, and we would hope that the populations in the besieged towns will no longer feel that they are being held to ransom as part of the political struggle that is going on in that country.

We also want to thank the Council members for the strong support given to our suggestion that the Council consider a product on the humanitarian situation in Yemen. We think that is an issue that needs looking into next month, and we look forward to working with other Council members on that idea.

Lastly, I welcome the fact that we have been able to agree on the trip to West Africa, in particular to visit Guinea-Bissau. Over a number of months, we have been among others that have suggested that it is important that the Council show its close engagement with that country.

Let me conclude by commending, you, Rafael, and your team. Not only have you been very busy, but extremely gracious in the way you have cajoled us along the course of the difficult work we have all been engaged in. I think you have shown great dignity and professionalism, so I thank you for that. And I wish Angola all the best for next month.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish to express our utmost appreciation to Venezuela for organizing this wrap-up session. Malaysia continues to believe that such meetings provide an important platform for delegations to place on record their impressions and reflections on the Security Council's work.

I join previous speakers, Mr. President, in congratulating you and the entire Venezuelan delegation for guiding the Council through what has proved to be an extremely intense and productive month of February. Under your presidency, the Council has covered a broad range of issues and questions concerning specific situations in countries and regions, as well as thematic issues. The summing up of your presidency clearly captured how skilfully you have steered the Council to address those issues.

On that note, we appreciate Venezuela's initiative to convene a debate (see S/PV.7620) on working methods with a focus on the work of the sanctions committees. We believe that the outcome of the debate in note S/2016/170, adopted by the Council under your leadership, lays down important guidelines that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's subsidiary bodies. In addition, the open debate (see S/PV.7621) on respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations was an important opportunity for the Council and the wider membership to take stock of our collective performance, in particular in the maintenance of international peace and security.

We are also pleased to have participated in the open debate (see S/PV.7629) last Tuesday on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. We continue to believe that the strength of the architecture is anchored in the Peacebuilding Commission and its advocacy and convening role, as well as in its proven capacity to act relatively quickly and flexibly. Those are important features that must be preserved and strengthened in the review's outcome.

I also appreciate your efforts, Sir, in organizing informal discussions on the issue of the selection of the Secretary-General. In that regard, I note and welcome the President of the General Assembly's proactive initiative of organizing hearings for the aspiring candidates beginning in mid-April. We are of the view that the Council should support such initiatives, and also contribute to making the process more transparent and inclusive.

The Council and the wider membership remain seized of numerous challenges and threats to international peace and security. Throughout this month, we discussed the work of a number of subsidiary bodies, namely, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006); the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009), concerning Somalia and Eritrea; the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005), concerning the Sudan; the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), concerning South

Sudan; and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

My delegation welcomes the adoptions of resolution 2266 (2016), on Yemen sanctions. We reaffirm our full support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and his efforts. We also urge the parties in conflict to put aside their differences in order to achieve a new ceasefire. Prolonged conflict will only exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation. Indeed, the consequences of the security and political vacuum have been exploited by the terrorist groups.

In addition to the monthly discussions on the situation in Palestine, the Council benefited from additional discussions, specifically on international protection for the Palestinian people and on the situation of children in the occupied Palestinian territories. In that regard, my delegation welcomes and supports the initiative undertaken by France to revive the Middle East process. We believe that such an initiative, aimed at contributing to the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, is long overdue.

Later this afternoon, we will continue to respond to the situation in Syria. It is my delegation's fervent hope that this time the cessation of hostilities will be adhered to by all the parties to the conflict, and allow for some meaningful respite from the fighting. We reiterate the call on all the parties to engage constructively in the United Nations-led dialogue and consultations with a view to achieving a positive outcome, especially for the Syrian civilians, women and children who have borne the brunt of the hostilities.

The Council undertook a visit to Burundi last month, and a few days ago the Secretary-General was in the country. Since yesterday, a five-member high-level African Union delegation has been in consultations with the Government and other partners and stakeholders in the country. In the light of such sustained attention and offers of engagement and support from a wide range of international actors, we would urge all Burundian stakeholders to seize the opportunity and engage constructively with all partners with a view to creating the necessary conditions for dialogue and for the return to peace, security and stability.

Very briefly, on Guinea-Bissau, Malaysia is pleased that the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau has been extended. We fully support the mission's role and function in ensuring that the country stays the course towards national reconciliation, strengthening governance and achieving security and stability.

Before concluding, I would like to note that the Council has before it a number of important issues still to be discussed, and decisions to take, before we close the chapter for this month. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to stress how vital it is for the Council to be united in addressing the plight of the victims of conflict, terrorism and other challenges to international peace and security around the world. As such, we must draw deeply on our reserves of goodwill, flexibility and a spirit of constructiveness so that the Council as a whole can continue to effectively discharge its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. We remain committed to doing our part.

Finally, I wish Ambassador Gaspar Martins of Angola and his team the very best for their presidency in March. We look forward to it.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the entire Venezuelan team, for your hard, highly professional and effective work in February. Despite the fact that today we are formally summing up our work for the month, some important and sensitive issues still require our attention in the hours and days remaining, including one that has particular importance for my country, that is, the briefing on Monday by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We commend your approach, Sir, in taking into account requests from all delegations and doing your best to try to accommodate them without prejudice or discrimination.

Over the past few weeks, the Council has had to address quite a range of issues, but our performance has produced mixed feelings. I would cite as one of the highlights the debate (see S/PV.7620) on the Security Council's working methods. It was heartening to see a high level of convergence of views and an overall general understanding on the areas where the Council can make tangible improvements in the work of its subsidiary bodies. In that regard, the issuance of a presidential note on the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies (S/2016/170) is a welcome development and definitely a step in the right direction, albeit a small one. We therefore look forward to the first meeting next month of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions and stand ready to work closely with all Council members in order to further improve our methods of work.

The open debate (see S/PV.7621) on respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security was very useful. The variety of views and approaches to the subject demonstrated the lasting validity of the Charter's provisions. However, the discussion made one thing clear, which is that any violation of any principles of the Charter undermines the foundation of the Organization and diminishes its legitimacy in the eyes of the world. Dangerous precedents set by unscrupulous leaders with no moral compass, preoccupied with visions of personal grandeur and blinded by imperialist ambitions, may tempt some into thinking that it may actually pay to bend the rules here and there, interpret the Charter as it suits one and lie persistently, brazenly and with a straight face. The lack of concrete action on the part of the United Nations designed to punish perpetrators, correct wrongs and restore respect for the Charter's purposes and principles makes it only too apparent to Member States that might makes right.

Is that the world that our leaders wanted to build 70 years ago? Is that the world that we would like to create now? Our answer is a resolute no. What we need is a United Nations capable of efficiently and swiftly responding to Charter violations and other challenges of today.

That brings me to the second part of my statement. The Security Council has a special responsibility to ensure that the Charter's purposes and principles are upheld and respected. Violations of the Charter quite often result in armed conflicts that kill, maim and displace huge numbers of people. When that happens, it means that the Council has failed in its main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. For the Council to be effective, it must be united — and that is something that is missing. Nowhere has that been more pronounced and evident than in the context of the Syrian conflict. Despite numerous discussions of the Syrian issue in the Council, in practice very little has been done to alleviate the Syrian people's suffering, put an end to the bloody conflict and focus energy and resources on combating the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, which is metastasizing into other countries in the region. A glimmer of hope for the Syrian people has recently appeared. We sincerely hope that the Council will not waste that precious window of opportunity.

I would be remiss not to mention the issue of the sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. After the January nuclear test, we expressed our strong condemnation of the Pyongyang actions threatening international peace and security. After the February missile launch, we reiterated our position that the Council must react robustly to such flagrant violations of numerous Security Council resolutions. While it is somewhat regrettable that it took so long for a draft resolution to arrive on the Council's table, we are nonetheless satisfied with its comprehensive nature and would like to express our appreciation for the efforts of the United States and China, which drafted the text. We consider the draft resolution's upcoming adoption to be a significant step on the part of the international community in helping to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime. We are realists, and we do not expect Pyongyang's behaviour to change overnight. But our long-term hope is that the Korean peninsula will eventually be transformed from one of the world's hotspots into a region of peace and stability.

Although today we are discussing what has been done in the past month, I suggest that we take a look further ahead to an issue of great interest and importance to the general United Nations membership — the appointment of the next Secretary-General. In February there were some useful exchanges among Council members on the selection process. With seven candidates officially nominated so far and new ones likely to emerge, I believe it is very important to ensure that the Council start holding some preliminary discussions on the issue right away, without postponing it until July. In our opinion, it would be beneficial if the Council were to convene at least once a month on the subject in consultations format, under the "Any other business" item, maybe towards the end of each month.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to wish you a successful completion of your duties in the next few days and to assure the incoming Angolan presidency of our full support.

Mr. Zhao Yong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank you for convening today's meeting, Mr. President. The Council has been very busy this month, and China greatly appreciates the fact that Venezuela has presided over our work efficiently and smoothly. I would like to focus on three issues relating to the Council's work this month.

First, on the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks are currently at an impasse, the security situation there is worsening and the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is serious. China is deeply concerned about that. Preserving the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people is the collective responsibility of the international community, which should take stronger measures to reactivate the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, push Palestine and Israel to resume them as soon as possible and meanwhile strengthen cooperation with Palestine and economic assistance to it with a view to alleviating the humanitarian situation. The Council should respond positively to Palestine and the Arab States' legitimate aspirations and carefully study the issue of providing international protection to Palestine, in order to play a greater role in promoting the peace talks. China welcomes all initiatives conducive to ameliorating the situation and resuming peace negotiations.

Secondly, with regard to Syria, there has been good progress recently in bringing in humanitarian assistance and promoting a cessation of hostilities. Important decisions were made at the ministerial meeting in Munich of the International Syria Support Group regarding expanding humanitarian aid and halting hostilities. The Russian Federation and the United States reached an agreement on ceasing hostilities, which China welcomes. We call on the international community and the countries of the region to continue to support the mediation efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura and to act together to push all the parties in Syria to accept and implement the agreement as soon as possible, with the aim of ceasing hostilities and resuming the Geneva peace talks in order to create conditions conducive to a rapid and appropriate settlement of the Syrian issue.

Thirdly, on South Sudan, good progress has recently been made in implementing the agreement on resolving the conflict in South Sudan. The Government of South Sudan has declared that it is going to establish a Government of national unity in the first week of March. China highly appreciates the mediation efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

South Sudan has just started its peaceful reconstruction, and there is a long and difficult journey ahead. It therefore needs strong support from the international community. China hopes that the Council and the international community at large will continue to provide support to IGAD. Meanwhile, we actively encourage all the parties in South Sudan to meet each other half way and push for an early formation of a transitional Government so as to restore peace, stability and development in the country at an early date. China will continue to play a constructive role in the political settlement of the question of South Sudan.

Last but not least, I wish the delegation of Angola, the incoming President of the Security Council, all the best in the month of March.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): The Security Council deals with diverse challenges, many of which we struggle to find agreement and consensus on. On one, however, the will of the Council, and indeed of the membership of the Organization, could not be clearer: North Korea. Over the past weeks, North Korea's dangerous actions and defiance of the Council's previous resolutions merit an unyielding response from the body mandated by the Charter of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security.

Let us be clear. North Korea's nuclear tests and missile launches are often described as "provocations". However, that euphemism does not do justice to what the North Korean regime is doing. It is not merely "provoking", it is not merely acting in defiance of the demands of the Security Council, and indeed the world. No, North Korea, with each test, with each launch, is steadily and practically advancing its operational capacity to develop and deploy nuclear weapons. With each test, with each so-called provocation, North Korea is building its ability to endanger every nation of the world. And with each act of defiance, our collective resolve to stop it must become even stronger.

We cannot tolerate actions from a regime that on a grotesque, widespread and systematic basis flouts international law by abusing its own people and, with similar precision and disregard, defies the will of the Council by developing the most dangerous weapons known to humankind. That is why yesterday, after extensive and productive collaboration and consultation with partners, the United States submitted a draft Security Council resolution in response to North Korea's recent nuclear test and ballistic missile launch. If adopted, the draft resolution would represent the strongest set of sanctions imposed by the Security Council in a generation. Those sanctions would send an unambiguous message to the regime of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: "the world will not accept your proliferation, there will be consequences for your actions, and we will work relentlessly to stop your nuclear programme".

The sanctions are not punitive; they are practical and will help our collective efforts to impede the Democratic People's Republic of Korea programme by making it harder for the country to raise the funds, import the technology and acquire the know-how to advance its illicit nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. As long as North Korea continues to undermine international security through its dangerous pursuit of nuclear weapons, we must work together to impede its ability to endanger our shared security and to hold it accountable.

In Syria, efforts have intensified to ensure unfettered humanitarian access while putting in place a cessation of hostilities leading to the resumption of political talks. The International Syria Support Group and the parties in Syria are working together towards a cessation of hostilities, set to go into effect at midnight tonight in Damascus, thereby offering a possibility to halt the horrific violence and relieve the suffering of the Syrian people. We expect the implementation of the cessation of hostilities to end the aerial bombardments and the regime ground offensives, which have cost so many lives and displaced more than 70,000 around Aleppo in recent days.

Meanwhile, recent progress on humanitarian access to a handful of besieged areas is welcome, but is only the beginning. While we commend the work of the International Syria Support Group's humanitarian task force, this is only the first step towards full, sustained and unimpeded access throughout the country. We will not be satisfied with one-off deliveries to a handful of areas that should have had unimpeded assistance all along, and which has been completely denied and, in some cases, denied for years.

Over the last week and a half, convoys have provided aid to less than 100,000 people — less than one fourth of those living in serious besieged areas. Millions still urgently require aid. The Syrian regime, and all parties, needs to lift any and all obstacles to assistance. Ultimately, the only way to end Syria's conflict is through a political process leading to a political transition in accordance with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

The crisis in South Sudan continues. Leadership from the opposing parties is desperately needed. We heard a comprehensive set of briefings on South Sudan last Friday, and yesterday's briefing by the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), Festus Mogae, was particularly important. The JMEC is essential to progress in South Sudan, and we hope to continue to hear regular updates from the JMEC Chairperson in order to appropriately support his work in overseeing the implementation of the peace agreement.

We continue to be alarmed by the human rights abuses in South Sudan, and the briefing by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) described a scorched-earth strategy, a strategy that manifests itself in civilians being intentionally burned alive in their homes. As the United Nations detailed in a recent report on Unity state, we are now seeing coping strategies among the most severely food-insecure households that include food-security experts observing things being consumed in South Sudan that they have never seen before, such as the consumption of reconstituted dried goatskins, meaning eating goatskin off of furniture, or eating inner sections of palm tree trunks, meaning eating wood.

Given the seemingly unending and horrific nature of the abuses unfolding in South Sudan, we must all remain committed to supporting accountability for the perpetrators, including through the mechanisms outlined in the peace agreement, namely, the establishment of a credible hybrid tribunal. The people of South Sudan deserve security and peace, and they also deserve justice.

In Burundi, while we welcome recent announcements and reports of prisoner releases, announcements must be followed by action. Credible dialogue outside of Burundi with the opposition must restart now. Unfortunately, the Government continues to crackdown on civil society and political opposition. And, also unfortunately, widespread human rights violations are a daily occurrence. Necessarily, the Council must continue to examine all options to ensure that a credible political process proceeds and that civilians are safe.

Last week, six activists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were arrested after calling on President Kabila to step down. On Wednesday, they were sentenced to two years in prison for incitement.

Intimidation must stop, and the Security Council, in the months ahead, must remain focused on ensuring timely and credible elections.

Finally, we were pleased that the Council discussed Burma's political and human rights situation in consultations yesterday afternoon. We particularly welcomed OHCHR's perspective and will continue to encourage further high-level Council interaction with that Office in future meetings.

A peaceful post-election period is crucial for stability and maintaining the confidence of the people of Burma in this transition. However, there remain obvious and important impediments to the realization of a fully democratic and civilian Government. Although we have seen a number of key important steps in the right direction, we remain concerned about significant human rights problems on a variety of fronts, including, but not limited to, the treatment of the Rohingya. The situation in Rakhine state remains grim, and the Government needs to take significant, sustained and strategic steps to address the hatred and bigotry and resolve the crisis.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and your delegation, for your leadership during this past month. Our work this month is not yet over.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to express our delegation's gratitude to you and your entire delegation, Mr. President, for the excellent work you have done. I would say that yours has been an active and activist presidency. It was active in that we worked at a laudable pace, and it was also activist in that it brought to the Security Council and the membership issues that, although of interest to all of us, were of particular importance for Venezuela to highlight.

Venezuela as President rightly pushed us to work on these issues in the same manner as other members of the Security Council who have the same rights, using the mechanism "Other matters" to bring together all of the points that are of concern to us because they were considered relevant to deal with at this stage.

I am not going to touch on the various issues that we covered, since you, Mr. President, in your exhaustive summary, covered almost all of them, and my colleagues have also made reference to the entire list of subjects. What I would like to do is reflect on things given the 57 days that my delegation has been here in the Security Council, and highlight some themes merely because I am new in the Security Council, and they stand out for me. But I would like to stress that we have had a busy agenda, heavy with horrors: the humanitarian situations in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, which are truly depressing. But here it is important to highlight and pay tribute to the role being played by humanitarian bodies both in the United Nations system and in the many non-governmental organizations that are on the ground risking their lives. Unfortunately we have seen reports about dozens of humanitarian workers who have lost their lives in all of these conflicts.

At the same time, I wish to highlight the sacrifice being made by the troops and the forces deployed in the many peacekeeping operations, who have also lost many lives carrying out the tasks that have been given them by the Security Council. So this leads me to say that on the ground we have a large number of people who are not just carrying the flag but also paying for it with their very lives.

I should also like to highlight the role being played in many forums by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. In many of the situations where they are playing a role — I do not want to list any names so as not to forget anyone, that would be unfair — we see their perseverance, determination, efforts, dedication and impartiality and objectivity. We deem that there has been a positive balance in that which we have seen over the 57 days that we have been in the Council.

I would also perhaps analyse how we have worked over these 57 days. I am concerned that we have had more than 75 meetings in 57 days; that is more than one meeting per calendar day, so we have had many meetings. But when I look at the outcome, there have been very few results indeed. So far we have had six resolutions, including five that are basically procedural, "rollovers" as they say in English. One was that on Colombia; it is really outside the scope of the Security Council. Yes, excellent work was undertaken by the Colombians themselves; they were well supported by Cuba, Norway, Chile and Venezuela, but the origin of the resolution was the result of work done outside the Security Council. The Council did a good thing in approving the resolution.

Other outcomes were numerous press statements. I counted 21, eight of which are statements condemning terrorist attacks, so they had to be issued, because we are all against terrorism and repudiate it. So they are almost a knee-jerk reaction. Then we had 13 press statements of some substance. The problem is that in one way or another we are responding to horrendous situations on the ground with press statements.

On the other hand, there have been good developments. I think it was Gerald who said that said that we are maybe not pleased but relieved, with respect to Syria, for instance. I would say that the progress we have seen in Syria also is external to the Council Chamber, if not to members of the Council. If they have played an important role, then we welcome them and support them. The Security Council should support all those activities and developments that could lead to pacifying the situation and preparing the ground for forward movement.

The negotiation process has taken place outside of the Security Council. Perhaps that is the best it could have been. But for me, as a new arrival in the Security Council, I would point out as something of interest that issues of this scale are dealt with more profitably outside the Security Council rather than inside it.

Let me come back to something that we pointed out our wrap-up; we make a distinction between meetings and consultations. There is a difference between plenary meetings and consultations. It makes me think of the title of a poem by a Uruguyan poet, Mario Benedetti, "Let us demystify the Milky Way". It is a very lovely poem; I will not recite it here. But the idea of demystification is so important; let us try to demystify consultations. Frankly, in consultations, no member of the Security Council, as far as I can see, has said anything that could not have been said here in this very Chamber, in front of the entire membership. We could have done it here, but no. We go into that little room over there, and we agree on certain things in a narrower context, but having listened to things over there in that little room. But the truth is that there was nothing said there that could not have been said here. I think this is the culture of the Security Council.

Speaking of the Council, I wish to pay tribute in the following respect. The presidency is not the person responsible for achieving all the outcomes, such as for Syria and Yemen. It does not depend on the presidency. But the Venezuelan presidency raised the issue of the working methods of subsidiary bodies, particularly the sanctions committees. It had an idea, made a proposal and issued a presidential note — useful to the Security Council, well elaborated by the presidency and a concrete achievement by Venezuela that made a contribution to our body of work.

Therefore, in line with what I have just said, I would like once again to thank you, Rafael, and your entire delegation. Next Tuesday we will welcome our colleagues from Angola, to whom we wish the best of luck.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Rafael, and your team for your outstanding presidency. It is quite clear to me that we would be nothing without our teams. I would also like to wish every success to the presidency of Angola.

I shall concentrate on two aspects. As Elbio Rosselli always says, it is difficult for the last speaker to say something new. But I will try to do so.

First, I would like to refer to a practice that we have seen this month, which is that of discussing matters under the item "Any other business". My team has been working intensively and, according to our calculations, you, Sir, convened 12 such meetings — although, you, Sir, say the number is 14. This practice seems to me to be necessary and advisable because, in fact, that is the work of the Security Council. The Council cannot limit itself to meeting only when the schedules are set in accordance with the reporting system. We have to meet when there is a situation that demands the attention of the Security Council. However, despite all the fondness and trust that I have for you, Mr. President, 14 meetings seem perhaps a bit too many. You, Mr. President, have the great distinction of having created a new trend or doctrine. However, in the light of the upcoming presidencies — those of Angola, China and Egypt — I would like to say to all members that we need to find a balance between quality and quantity. The item "Any other business" is good, but we need to reserve it for true emergency situations. If we look to the past, we see that previously this item was used in very exceptional cases, but this month it has become frequent. That is fine. You, Sir, have created a new school of thought, but I call for prudence.

Secondly, Spain is a great defender of transparency, which means that what we do in the Security Council can be shared to some extent with the General Assembly. I am very proud that during our presidency our team decided to end the month with a wrap-up session — later known as a Toledo style wrap-up — that allowed for interaction between members of the Security Council and members of the General Assembly.

I am a bit disappointed today at seeing the small number of people who are listening to us. Why does that trouble me? Because they cannot talk to us. We are in this magnificent Chamber talking about what we do in the Security Council, while they have to limit themselves to simply listening and cannot ask any questions. My request, and that of Spain's, is that, if it is agreeable to them, the three upcoming presidencies I mentioned, as well as other subsequent ones, agree that the wrap-up session be held in the the Toledo format —that is, to allow members of the General Assembly to ask us questions. I will not go into any more details on that point.

What I found very interesting in Ambassador Rosselli's intervention was his mention of the proliferation of meetings and, at the same time, the lack of resolutions. I would add something else, which is what most concerns me. It is true that we meet a lot and produce little. However, I would change the words a bit. I believe we talk too much and do not implement enough: there is too much talk in Security Council meetings. And while some resolutions are indeed adopted, where we really fall short is on implementing resolutions and presidential statements.

The second issue I want to mention is humanitarian affairs. I believe that this is one of the greatest hallmarks of the Venezuelan presidency, which I applaud. There have been countless meetings on humanitarian issues — on Syria, Yemen, South Sudan and other places. At the end of the day, however, we are talking about people in need. When we focus on humanitarian concerns, Council meetings allow us to do three things: first, to establish early-warning mechanisms; secondly, to facilitate humanitarian access; and, thirdly, and most important, to promote respect for humanitarian law.

To conclude, let me touch on two very timely issues related to threats to international peace and security.

First, with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I would like to fully align myself with the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Japan. I believe that it is absolutely essential that the Security Council adopt a draft resolution that marks a qualitative leap forward in terms of sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Why? First, because previous resolutions have proved to be insufficient; secondly — and I trust there will be support from the 15 members of the Council for this — because there is a need to send a signal of unity and a single message; and, thirdly, because I think it is urgent to do so, for we cannot allow there to be any delay on the part of the members of the Council in the face of threats to international peace and security.

With regard to Syria, I will be very brief: I trust that we will adopt a draft resolution this afternoon. I will therefore save my statement for the meeting that will start some time after 3 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should once again like to make a statement in my national capacity.

It seems to me that this has been a very interesting meeting. I should first like to clarify that we have sent out an invitation to an open Toledo format wrap-up session, to be held on Monday at 4 p.m., in line with the commitment we made at the first such meeting, held under Spain's presidency. And we have continued to insist on that ever since. As members know better than I do — given that they have had much more time on the Council, especially the permanent members, such as the United Kingdom — this meeting is being held in order for an official record to be prepared. Everything we are saying here is recorded, and I can hear the reporters preparing the records. There is thereby accountability for the Council.

Whether or not the Security Council is losing some of its prestige or legitimacy at the United Nations — those are not matters that will be resolved in a month. There are some issues, however, such as the lack of resolutions adopted in the Security Council, that make the General Assembly view the Council as an entity that already taken its decisions in advance. Regardless, the first thing I wanted to mention here is, as I have just said, the meeting to be held at 4 p.m. next Monday. We have tried to honour all the requests that have been made for the agenda of that meeting. The German Foreign Minister will be with us on Monday morning, while at the afternoon meeting on Kosovo we will have with us the Foreign Minister of Serbia and the representative of Kosovo. But we will indeed end Monday with a meeting in which we hope that all the members of the General Assembly can voice their opinions on the subject of today's meeting. I am inviting a number of Ambassadors to join us so that we can address these matters.

On another matter, when we saw the Council's original programme of work — established in accordance with the periodic reports we consider — we found it somewhat sad given all the problems in the world. While the Secretariat does in fact do excellent work in supporting the Council, there are nevertheless other issues that are both timely and pending. The only way to take up those issues has been under the item "Any other business". We do not expect that a resolution will be the outcome of every discussion under that agenda item. As is well known, however, especially by the permanent members, the Security Council often serves as a sounding board and provides for a process to later build consensus around a particular issue, such as we have seen in the case of Syria. I do not know how many resolutions have been adopted and meetings have been held on Syria. We now hope that at last today we can sign a ceasefire, which is just the beginning of a process. The same goes for the issue of Ukraine over the past year — we have already been on the Council for a year. I am talking about recurring issues that elicit a great deal of interest. When the issue of the nuclear tests arose, we met on a Sunday. That is how it ought to be, and I thank Elbio for what he said — as South Americans, we understand each other well.

We cannot allow talking about Western Sahara to be forbidden, for example. Nobody talks about Western Sahara, and there is no way to talk about the last colony in Africa in a public format. There is no way because they block it. It is possible that at some point conflict may once again erupt — the Polisario Front may break the ceasefire or there may be a return to war — and then we will see it as an emergency situation.

It is the same for the issue of Palestine. We really do not expect anything, because the Security Council is unable even to produce elements to the press with regard to issue of Palestine. However, children continue to die. The situation grows ever-more complicated, and at some point we will find ourselves with a conflict in Palestine. Then we will hold emergency meetings. We will have humanitarian meetings.

In this way the Security Council is more reactive than preventive. Therefore, the use of "Any other business" seems to us the only way we can talk about issues that we think should not continue to go ignored. That is why we took this decision in our presidency. By the way, I should clarify — Davey, Ambassador Pressman, mentioned that our work this month was not yet over, and he is concerned about our meeting tomorrow — that we will meet tomorrow, as we will on Monday, until we address all the issues before us. Hopefully, we will be able to decide on all the pending draft resolutions — on North Korea and Syria — and take care of everything we have to do. This meeting is not the end, but this time slot was the only available for the wrap-up session.

As I was saying, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of a body by the number of resolutions adopted. It is a political discussion. This is a political discussion, and the purpose is to create awareness and to reach consensus. However, in the end each country must consult with its capital and see what to do. But the Security Council is just that: a sounding board for issues.

Returning to the point made by Matthew, Ambassador Rycroft — and I regret that he has left; he must be working on one of the draft resolutions — with regard to transparency and the issue of interaction, it seems to us very important that more than 70 countries took the floor in the open debate (see S/PV.7621) on respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as a key element for the maintenance of international peace and security. Had no delegation attended, then we would have reason to be worried; for it would have meant that the purposes and principles no longer held any importance for Member States. Again, I do not expect the members of the General Assembly to change their view of the Security Council, but I think that meeting offered a way for the Assembly to say to the Council that the subject was important, as in some situations the purposes and principles are being, or are on the verge of being, violated.

The other issue I wanted to highlight — and I appreciate all the comments in this respect — is that this month we were able for the first time here to hear from countries subject to sanctions. That goes to the issue of transparency. There is nothing worse, or as opaque, as a sanctions committee. It is horrible. No one knows what goes on. And far less transparent are the decisions taken in the committees. Obviously, this is a political organ. There are no technical experts here, and no one sitting here is a technical expert in anything. We all work in the political realm and hold political positions, and we must be prepared to debate. In our country we are used to democratic debate: there is no veto; there is an open, democratic debate, and the majority decides. That is what we would like to introduce.

I thank everyone present for their comments and for their expressions of friendship and sympathy with our country. We have tried to provide a small example of the nature of Venezuela. We will continue to do so and to build closer relationships with all the countries of the international community, all the while showing who we are: a people of peace with a clear position and very clear principles, and always trying to strengthen and help the rest of the international community.

The representative of Spain has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I simply wanted to wrap-up Toledo style by noting what you have just said, Mr. President, for which I commend you.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7634

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7634th meeting

Friday, 26 February 2016, 3.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ramírez Carreño	(Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of))
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.50 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, to participate in this meeting. On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. De Mistura, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Geneva.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. De Mistura.

Mr. De Mistura: On behalf of the Secretary-General, I hope to soon welcome the adoption of a draft resolution that will help all of us address an issue that we have been jointly working on for at least the past three weeks. We have come a long way since the first meeting of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) in Vienna on 30 October 2015. Much has transpired since I last briefed the Council on 5 February, the day that I suspended the inter-Syrian talks in the light of the positions articulated by the parties and the lack of progress on the ground.

Three weeks later, and as a result of the heavy lifting done by members of the ISSG, particularly of the co-Chairs of the two task forces that were formed in Munich on 12 February, aid has been delivered in the past 10 days to almost 110,000 people, and 200 trucks are moving inside Syria in order to reach six locations. The first World Food Programme test air-drop in Deir ez-Zour has also taken place in order to reach an area where there are about 230,000 people under siege by Daesh.

Perhaps most importantly, we have had a provisional agreement on the terms of a cessation of hostilities in Syria, as announced by the Russian and United States co-Chairs at the beginning of this week. The cessation of hostilities is in fact meant to come into effect about an hour from now at midnight Damascus time. This meeting therefore has a special significance on this hopefully exceptional day and night for the Syrians. Consequently, with your permission, Sir, I will give the Council a rather unorthodox briefing. Rather than walking Council members through the implementation of resolution 2254 (2016), concerning which Council members already have the Secretary-General's letter of 17 February (S/2016/152), I would rather focus on the post-Munich developments, many unfolding almost in real time.

As an outcome of the ISSG meeting in Munich, we now have specific obligations for the ISSG members and the Syrians to fulfil. There are now a mechanism in place to that effect, an agreed set of actions and an immediate timetable and timeline. Council members have just deliberated on a draft resolution that, I hope, that will endorse all those steps. Let me give them an idea of the hard work that will have brought us to this stage once the Council has adopted the draft resolution.

First, on the issue of sustained humanitarian access and a humanitarian task force, the Council is well aware of the detailed briefings on the overall grave humanitarian situation in Syria. Over the past month alone, the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/862); the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (A/HRC/30/48); as well as the letter of the Secretary-General of 17 February have painted quite a tragic and harrowing picture of the desperate conditions of civilians — including many women, children and sick persons — in communities across Syria that are besieged by the Government, by the opposition or by Daesh. To that, we should add the unprecedented level of internal displacement and the growing number of Syrians embarking on an often fatal journey across land and sea to seek safety and asylum in Europe and elsewhere.

Humanitarian issues have taken a centre stage in the latest ISSG deliberations in Munich leading to the establishment of the ISSG task force on humanitarian access, which has already met three times since 12 February. My Office, including my Senior Adviser on Humanitarian Issues, Jan Egeland, and the United Nations country team in Damascus, led by United Nations Resident Coordinator Yacoub El Hillo, have worked hard, together with implementing partners such as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, to generate a humanitarian plan, as requested by ISSG. In the first instance, urgently needed humanitarian aid was delivered to the besieged areas identified in the Munich statement: Madaya, Zabadani, Moadamiya, Kafr Batna — which is part of eastern Ghouta — Kafraya and Foah.

Thanks to the prompt operational response of our World Food Programme colleagues and the generosity of ISSG members such as Germany, the United States and the Netherlands, as well as technical support offered by the Russian Federation, we also witnessed the first test-run of air drops in a difficult environment, such as that of Deir ez-Zour. We believe that to date, the task force members have lived up to the commitment they made in Munich by using their influence with the parties to ensure an increased flow of assistance — not enough, but quite an increased flow.

Those remarkable efforts were not without difficulties or ongoing serious delays. That is why the task force is addressing those, and we will be working on them. We are still waiting for the approval of an aid delivery for an additional 170,000 people in the besieged areas. The simplifcation of approval procedures by the Government still has some way to go and has yet to occur, but we are working on that matter. A constructive meeting took place yesterday between Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhdad and our own team on the issue. We hope to see the results soon. I personally addressed that issue with the Syrian Government myself during my visit to Damascus last week. I will continue to follow up on these matters very closely because they are of vital importance and they are a follow-up to the Munich commitments.

Regarding the cessation of hostilities in Syria and the ISSG ceasefire task force, less than three hours ago I joined the Russian Federation and United States co-Chairs in the first meeting of the ISSG ceasefire task force in this very room from which I am addressing the Council. In the presence of the ISSG members, the two co-Chairs, who have been working all week with partners in reaching out to the other parties on the ground, have outlined the terms for the cessation of hostilities in Syria announced on 22 February in a joint press release by the Russian Federation and the United States. Today, the two co-Chairs today noted that the principal Syrian parties have announced their willingness to participate in the cessation of hostilities beginning midnight Damascus time, which is basically less than one hour from now.

Armed opposition groups have announced their commitment to, first, fully implementing resolution 2254 (2015) and participating — I repeat, participating — in the United Nations-facilitated political negotiations. This time we want them to stay there and not to move from there until we have gone through at least the first phase of negotiations. Secondly, they will cease their attacks with any weapons, including rockets, mortars and anti-tank guided missiles, against the Syrian armed forces and any forces associated with them. Thirdly, they will refrain from acquiring or seeking to acquire territory from other parties to the agreement. Fourthly, they will allow humanitarian access. Fifthly, they will use proportionate force, which means not unless required to address an immediate threat and if and when responding in self-defence.

At the same time, the Syrian armed forces and other forces associated with them have committed to abiding by exactly the same points. That means ceasing attacks with any weapons, including aerial bombardment by the Syrian Air Force or Russian aerospace forces against the armed opposition groups that are party to the cessation of hostilities.

The ceasefire task force will oversee the cessation of hostilities under the co-chairship of Russia and the United States. Its primary functions will include, first, delineation of the territory held by Da'esh, Jabhat Al-Nusra and other organizations designated by the Security Council as terrorist that are not part of the cessation of hostilities. Secondly, it will issue communications to promote compliance with the de-escalation of tensions. Thirdly, it will assess the nature and credibility of incoming reports of non-compliance in order to determine response measures. Fourthly, it will determine and address patterns of persistent non-compliance before referring the matter to senior officials or a higher level.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations will support those efforts in a secretariat capacity and through a so-called permanent alert centre, better described as an operations centre — a few metres from here, by the way — which will be fielding and disseminating information to the co-Chairs in the wider ISSG. In turn, we, the United Nations, are not expected to characterize, assess and/or de-conflict information received, a function that will remain with the co-Chairs, which are the Russian Federation and the United States, in consultation with other ISSG members. The cessation of hostilities agreement, preceded by lengthy and detailed discussions in Geneva and the capitals and the outcome of intense consultations and negotiations, including at the highest level, is in itself a major achievement, and I think the Security Council will recognize that. The communication of the commitment on the part of the Syrian parties, essential to ending the war, is also a very important step.

In this room today, the task force members agreed to reach out to their respective contacts among the Syrian parties to explain the functioning of the task force, ensure the confidentiality of the discussions within the task force itself and refrain from making public comments about non-compliance reports under review, in order to give enough time for such non-compliance to be addressed. My Office, as the secretariat of the task force, will issue periodic public briefings on the task force's behalf on the status of the cessation of hostilities. Today's draft resolution also sets clear reporting requirements. Other parts of the United Nations system will obviously retain their own ability to comment on the situation in Syria within their own mandates, but the briefings will be done here.

The initial indication of consent by the parties to the conflict is indeed encouraging, but what we need now is for the parties to abide by the terms of the agreement. We have much work ahead of us to ensure the agreement's implementation, and the international community, the ISSG and the Syrian parties must remain steadfast in their own resolve. The draft resolution that we hope will be adopted shortly is, we hope, a further manifestation of the ISSG's commitment to delivering the parties to the agreement. Tomorrow, Saturday — starting at midnight tonight, in fact — will be critical. There will undoubtedly be no shortage of attempts to undermine the process. We are ready for them. We should not be impressed or overly concerned and should realize that this is part of any ceasefire and certainly of a cessation of hostilities.

The onus, however, remains with the co-Chairs, the relevant members of the ceasefire task force and all of us to work fast to defuse any tension that may arise from potential crossed wires, disinformation or incidents. The parties will have to show restraint in cases where there are still discrepancies in information on the presence and affiliation of groups. Daraya is a case in point. For our part, we will do all we can to support that important effort. My teams, both in Geneva and Damascus, will be on a rotating duty as of midnight tonight to follow up on it.

In adopting resolution 2254 (2015), the Council made it abundantly clear that only a negotiated political solution can bring an end to this horrible five-year conflict. The resolution also acknowledged that there is a close link between a nation-wide ceasefire and a parallel political process, and confidence in a political process will indeed increase the prospects of a ceasefire. We all know it, and the people of Syria have been telling and reminding us about it. In turn, a reduction in violence will help create conditions conducive to negotations, and progress on a cessation of hostilities will drastically improve the conditions on the ground, which in turn will lead to a significant scaling up of humanitarian deliveries across Syria. As the Secretary-General concluded in his letter to the Council, the agreement reached in Munich represents a precious opportunity for a speedy and credible resumption of intra-Syrian talks.

Assuming, therefore, that, God willing, the cessation of hostilities largely holds and the humanitarian access continues unabated, I intend to reconvene — based on consultation with the Secretary-General and hopefully with the Council's approval — the intra-Syrian talks on Monday, 7 March, with the same representatives of the Syrian Government in opposition, as well as the groups of individuals associated with the Moscow and Cairo meetings. As I told the parties at the outset of the talks on 29 January, the agenda remains exactly the same. It is based on resolution 2254 (2015), which aims for a comprehensive political settlement through negotiations on a political transition process pursuant to the Geneva final communiqué (S/2012/523, annex).

It is therefore my intention to focus on the core issues defined by the Council in resolution 2254 (2015): securing agreements on credible, inclusive, non-sectarian governance, a schedule and process for drafting a new constitution, and elements and a schedule for holding fair and free parliamentary and presidential elections on the basis of that new constitution. We have to build on the momentum that has emerged since Munich to help the parties reach an agreement on these matters in the shortest possible time. I am counting on the ISSG, but also the Security Council, to ensure that the parties come to Geneva again, this time ready to engage, to stay and to stay engaged on the substantive issues. I hope that the draft resolution that the Council may be adopting shortly will send a good signal in that direction.

While the primary focus of the talks is governance, I also intend to ensure that pressing confidence-building aspects that matter most to the Syrian people will continue to be addressed, including the release of any arbitrarily detained people, in particular women and children and individuals who have been kept hostage. I am also bound by the resolution 2254 (2015) to ensure the participation of the broadest spectrum of Syrians.

As I mentioned in my last briefing, in addition to consulting with representatives of the Government and the opposition, I have consulted and will continue to consult with civil society representatives and women — Syrian women. They make a remarkable contribution and need to continue to make a remarkable contribution to our work. I will continue this practice. Since the recess of the talks, both the Civil Society Support Room, which is a platform aimed at facilitating the participation of civil society organizations in Geneva, and the Syrian Women's Advisory Board have continued their preparations. They will continue doing so and help us — and help me to do my job. Furthermore, UN Women, which has worked closely with us over recent months, has seconded a gender adviser to my office to support both my work and that of the Women's Advisory Board.

In conclusion, we have so far, together, maintained the ISSG momentum. It now needs to be sustained. Both task forces are making progress — admittedly, not enough — but progress that would have been unimaginable just two months ago. The outcomes from both are first good steps — a first step towards sustained and unimpeded access throughout Syria in terms of humanitarian aid, and a first step towards, hopefully, a more durable nationwide ceasefire. I cannot overemphasize how important, determined and sustained political will is the good-faith implementation of the cessation of hostilities for making this agreement fixed.

On the humanitarian issue, it is essential not to lose focus. Our position remains clear — all sieges must end. The United Nations and other humanitarian partners must be granted unhindered and sustainable humanitarian access without preconditions, and civilians must be allowed freedom of movement. The ongoing support of the ISSG and of the Security Council remain therefore critical.

As for the cessation of hostilities, which we hope will be respected, it will not only create conditions conducive to the resumption of meaningful negotiations, but it will also and above all send a long-awaited signal of hope to the Syrian people that after five years of conflict there may be an end and a hope of an end to their suffering. These are all sentiments reinforced by ISSG members in today's meeting and just endorsed, I hope, by the Security Council through the adoption of resolution 2268 (2016).

On all these aspects, the United Nations is ready and present to provide support. The Secretary-General has confirmed it, and I reiterate it once again on his behalf. Everyone should do his or her share; we will do ours. Critical fault lines are being addressed now carefully and cautiously, be it which groups will be participating in the cessation of hostilities or which areas are being opened to access and how and on what priority basis. This will remain a complicated, painstaking process, but we should not give up since nothing is impossible, especially at this moment.

Going forward, I will continue to heavily count on the ISSG to resolve any possible ambiguities related to the talks as they arise and will keep the Council fully informed on progress as I have done before. Resolution 2254 (2015) was a ray of hope and a moment of hope that remains ongoing. It unanimously expressed the international community's grave concern at the continued suffering of the Syrians, the persistent and brutal violence and the perverse impact of terrorist and violent extremist ideology.

We are now at the crossroads and we have the possibility of turning the page in the Syrian conflict after almost six years of one of the bloodiest conflicts in recent memory. It is potentially a historic juncture, bringing an end to the killing and destruction and giving new life with renewed hope to the Syrians.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. De Mistura for his briefing and for his work.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/185, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation and the United States of America. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2268 (2016).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy De Mistura for his briefing and for his dogged efforts — no matter how many obstacles are put in his way — to seek a way out for the people of Syria from this abysmal conflict.

We are gathered here at a critical moment. Resolution 2268 (2016), which we have just adopted and in which the Security Council endorses the cessation of hostilities in Syria, offers a genuine opportunity for a pause, at least in part, in the fighting in one of the most brutal conflicts the world has seen in a generation, a conflict that for the past five years the Security Council and the international community have been unable to stop. This resolution endorses a set of practical, concrete steps, along with terms to which the parties to the conflict must commit, to reduce the violence and create space for a long overdue political transition.

There is some scepticism as to whether this cessation of hostilities, which is scheduled to go into effect in less than an hour, at midnight Damascus time, will be respected from the outset or, just as important, whether it will hold with time. That scepticism is more than reasonable, given previous efforts that the Council and other multilateral institutions have undertaken to try to stop the monstrous violence and immeasurable suffering experienced by the Syrian people. Yet that record does not change the fact that this is our best chance to reduce the violence. Today, as in every previous effort, the only measure that matters is not the words on the page of this resolution, but whether these commitments are actually put into practice and whether these commitments lead to real changes on the ground.

For that to happen, first and foremost, the parties to the conflict must abide by the terms endorsed today. To that end, the United States has continued to consult closely with the major Syrian armed opposition groups, which have confirmed their acceptance of the terms of the cessation of hostilities through the High Negotiations Committee or directly with us. The vast majority among them are ready to participate in the cessation provided the Syrian Government, and the Governments and forces supporting it, abide by their commitments under the terms. We are therefore deeply concerned by the continued Syrian and Russian aerial bombardment of towns across Syria, aerial bombing that has caused massive displacement and hundreds of civilian deaths. Many of the towns being hit by Syrian and Russian bombers are towns such as Daraya, a suburb of Damascus that is being pummelled up to this very day, a town that is not held by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant or the Al-Nusra Front. It is hard to seem serious and sincere about ceasing hostilities when you ramp up fighting right up to the minute the cessation of hostilities is to take effect.

Secondly, those countries with influence on the parties must use it to press the parties to live up to their commitments. And thirdly, when violations occur, as inevitably they will, a sober, coordinated response is critical. The International Syria Support Group (ISSG) has set up a task force assigned specific steps to address allegations of non-compliance, including working with parties to de-escalate violence that could quickly spiral out of control.

Let us be real. It is going to be extremely challenging, especially at the outset, to make this work. In a world of horrific crises, arguably no crisis has done more to threaten international peace and security or has inflicted as much human suffering as the conflict in Syria. We are all now broken records here in the Council about the fact that this crisis cannot be resolved through force alone and that it will require a political solution. We have heard it; we have said it. But today we have an opportunity. If we can make this cessation of hostilities hold, which is a very big if, we will take a genuine step towards that political solution we have been talking about for so long.

As we all know, if implemented, a cessation of hostilities would not apply to terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which will continue to fight. Yet even a partial de-escalation would make a real difference in the lives of Syrians, and it would also allow us to expand the reach of humanitarian access, which, despite the modest gains that have been made in recent days and weeks, is extremely limited and extremely inadequate, particularly when it comes to hard-to-reach or besieged areas, where people continue to starve to death and die of treatable illnesses owing to a lack of medicine. Man-made starvation continues, man-made deaths, because medicine is being stripped from convoys. Regular, sustained and unimpeded access must be granted to all Syrians in need, no matter where they live.

A cessation of hostilities will also help foster conditions in which Special Envoy De Mistura could reconvene talks between the parties in Geneva, which is crucial to working towards the political transition that offers the only long-term solution to Syria's conflict. That transition, as we have said all along, must be a transition away from Bashar Al-Assad, who has lost all legitimacy to lead. As President Obama said yesterday, it is clear that after years of his barbaric war against his own people, including torture and barrel bombs and sieges and starvation, many Syrians will never stop fighting until Al-Assad is out of power.

The cessation will not itself ensure that a political solution is reached, but it does at least create conditions in which one is possible. Beyond respecting the cessation, the parties can take other meaningful steps to build confidence, starting by releasing detainees, especially women and children, who continue to be subjected to deplorable treatment and inhumane conditions.

Let me conclude. All are aware that on 11 February the ISSG issued its statement in Munich, which set out the initial terms of the cessation of hostilities that is supposed to go into effect shortly. Not long after the statement was issued, a group of around a dozen Syrians huddled in the rain outside a checkpoint in the town of Kilis, along Turkey's border with Syria. The men are just a handful of the nearly 4.5 million Syrians who have fled their country since the conflict began. These Syrians were actually waiting to go back into Syria in hopes of retrieving their families and bringing them to safety in Turkey. A journalist asked them if they thought that the deal reached in Munich would actually lead to a pause in the violence, No, they all said, without hesitation. One of the men, a 25-year-old named Faisal, who would not give his full name out of fear that his loved ones still in Syria could be harmed as a result, said of the ISSG statement, "The deals they make there are so isolated and detached from this reality here". Whether this effort at a cessation of hostilities helps to change that reality, the reality on the ground for people like Faisal and so many millions of Syrians who have been through what no human being should ever have to endure, whether that happens depends in significant part on what the nations in this Chamber do when the cessation begins less than an hour from now.

It is true that our actions alone will not determine whether or not the cessation of hostilities holds. Even if we all act in good faith, other parties have to power to sabotage the cessation by their actions. Yet it is also true that the failure by any one of our nations to live up to our part of the deal, which includes working to ensure that the commitments made are honoured, pressing on the parties within our respective spheres of influence and making sure that sober, united steps are taken to de-escalate violations when they occur, could also result in the failure of the cessation. If this collapses,we will lose the most tangible opportunity we have had in a very long time to reduce the suffering of the Syrian people and to create space for finding a political solution that will finally bring them peace. So much depends on what we do. Let us not squander this chance.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today another important collective step has been taken towards achieving a political solution to the conflict in Syria. The Security Council, in the resolution that it has just adopted — resolution 2268 (2016) — endorsed the joint statement of the Russian Federation and the United States of America as the co-Chairs of the International Syrian Support Group on the cessation of hostilities in that country, on conditions that are part and parcel of that joint statement.

This document and the resolution that has been adopted, which Russia co-sponsored, must be implemented strictly and without any preconditions. The process of implementation itself must be monitored reliably. What is important is that the resolution was adopted at almost exactly the same moment as the cessation of hostilities is entering into force in Syria. Many armed groups in Syria have already declared that they are ready to comply with its provisions.

As was confirmed in the joint statement, the cessation of hostilities regime will not apply to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Jabhat Al-Nusra or other terrorist organizations that have been recognized as such by the Security Council. The combat against them will continue. Our position is that the long-term stabilization of Syria will be impossible without eliminatimg the terrorist threat in that country.

To achieve that goal, it is essential to put an end to efforts to use terrorists as a weapon for suspect geopolitical aims. All sources of supply to the terrorists must be shut down reliably. At the Syrian border we must prevent illegal flows, which allow criminal groups to prosper and thrive. We need to put an end to the continuing infringement of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria by external forces.

The joint actions agreed with the United States can contribute to making this a real turning point in the Syrian crisis, which has gone on for far too long. We now have a real chance to end the violence and to step up our collective combat against terrorism and improve the very serious humanitarian situation in the country. Of vital importance is the fact that we are creating new conditions for developing the political process under the auspices of the United Nations and that the main role will be played by the Syrians themselves. That process should ensure a meaningful role for the Syrians that did not leave their homeland during the many years of conflict, in particular the Kurdish population, which is one of the key elements in the counter-terrorist efforts. In other words, it should ensure a meaningful role for all the representatives of the ethnic and religious components of Syrian society.

We understand that this process will be difficult and complex given how entrenched the conflict has become and the various efforts to derail the initial progress. However, inter-Syrian negotiations must be resumed as soon as possible and we should move forward on all the remaining aspects of the agenda. In fact, the resolution we have just adopted affirms that. We hope that the United Nations will be impartial and principled in its support of this process and that Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura will play a constructive role.

At the same time, we need to be firmly committed to all provisions of resolution 2254 (2015) and the other foundational documents. We should not single out individual components of those documents in order to take advantage of the changing situation on the ground or to benefit the selfish priorities of any particular opposition group. Any measure that could derail the political process by establishing preconditions should be rejected. We should not be at the beck and call of radicals, but rather should urge them to engage in dialogue. At the same time, we must end the harmful practice of providing external support to armed groups. That has had a very negative impact on the political process and threatens the future of the cessation of hostilities.

We expect the Syrian actors, the States of the region and the entire international community to act responsibly and implement the whole range of decisions on the Syrian political solution. The cornerstone of this process should be the interests of the Syrian people. We cannot squander this historic opportunity.

Russia has consistently supported a political solution to the conflict in Syria. Through our joint efforts, we launched the Vienna process and established the International Syria Support Group. We supported some of the most important foundational decisions of the Security Council on this conflict. We believe that the groundwork laid today for constructive cooperation will be essential to success on the path towards a peaceful solution.

In a broader context, we should discuss the possibility of developing a comprehensive strategy for political stabilization and the socioeconomic rebuilding of the Middle East region and North Africa. The solution to the challenges that the region is facing must be collective. The proposals of the Russian Federation to initiate broad-based cooperation in that area remain as valid as ever.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt wishes to thank all the members of the Security Council for their constructive engagement in dealing with one of the most important issues in the Arab world, namely, the Syrian crisis. We also wish to pay a special tribute to both the Russian Federation and the United States of America for their efforts that led to the announcement of the cessation of hostilities in Syria, which represents progress towards a ceasefire. This initiative has been strongly supported by Egypt in the framework of the International Syria Support Group. Resolution 2268 (2016), adopted today, provides it with a legal framework and support.

We stress the need for all parties to the conflict on the ground — Syrian and non-Syrian alike, be they involved either directly or indirectly in the conflict — to cease their hostilities at the time specified in the resolution. We also stress that any party that chooses not to abide by the cessation of hostilities agreement or the Council's resolution, or would violate that agreement, should alone bear the grave consequences of that action.

Egypt welcomes the cessation of hostilities agreement and today's resolution. We welcome their stress on the need to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria and to combat terrorist organizations. In that context, we affirm that a political solution that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people to freedom and democracy and maintains the unity, sovereignty and institutions of Syria, in line with the communiqués of the International Syria Support Group and resolution 2254 (2015), is the only way to an end the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people and enable Syrian State institutions to eliminate terrorism.

Egypt therefore welcomes the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, which have just begun through proximity talks with the Syrian Government and opposition groups in Geneva. We call on the Special Envoy to resume those talks as soon as possible and to finalize the arrangements for the resumption of United Nations-facilitated formal negotiations between the Government and the broadest possible spectrum of the Syrian opposition, pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015), which provides for a clear plan of action that is binding for all parties. All partners present on Syrian territory and all parts of Syrian society must participate in that process in order to maintain Syria's unity.

We therefore reiterate the need for the entire Syrian opposition to be represented at the formal negotiations, as set forth in resolution 2254 (2015). Those must include the Arab and Kurdish groups engaged in combating terrorism, especially the terrorism of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front in northern Syria. It is important to underscore that those groups have already made significant gains by liberating large areas from the grip of terrorists.

The armed conflict in Syria has assumed unimaginable dimensions. The Syrian people have been bearing the unbearable. Now is the time to put intentions to the test. It is time for accountability. I call on all parties without exception to stop attempting to please the warring parties at the expense of the Syrian people. I call on all parties to work to empower the Syrian people to take control of their future without foreign intervention.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2268 (2016), which endorses the cessation of hostilities agreement in Syria, which will enter into force in less than one hour. France has lent its full support to the adoption of the resolution, which offers hope for an immediate improvement of the situation of the Syrian people.

Throughout the nearly five years of the Syrian crisis, France's position has remained constant in support of the primacy of diplomacy over war in order to find a political solution that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people. For four months and since the first meeting in Vienna in October 2015, France has fully supported the diplomatic process that enabled the establishment of the International Syria Support Group, the adoption of resolution 2254 (2015) and the beginning in January of formal inter-Syrian negotiations under the auspices of the Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura.

France wants to see a process that will lead to tangible results for the Syrian people, not a process for the sake of a process. It certainly does not wish to see a process that would merely serve as a smokescreen to hide a military escalation, the main victims of which would be the civilian population and moderate opposition. We are of the firm belief, which was solidly and explicitly recalled by the Secretary-General in his letter of 17 February to the Security Council (S/2016/152), that as long as Syrians see no difference in their daily lives the negotiations will have no credibility. In that context, the cessation of hostilities agreed by the United States and Russia on 12 February should be welcomed as a contribution to the de-escalation and a step towards the settlement of the Syrian conflict. France, as I have said, fully supported the adoption of resolution 2268 (2016) endorsing the parameters of the cessation of hostilities.

This milestone is both a sign of hope and a test. It represents the hope that, for the first time, Syrians will see a decrease in the violence and bombings that haunt their daily lives, and a test of the good faith of the parties on the ground, including foreign Powers, that have accepted the cessation of hostilities. The role of the Security Council is therefore to support without hesitation anything that might lead to a lasting reduction in violence. However, the Council should also be realistic and exacting. As such, everything must be done to implement the agreement on the ground. To that end, France deems it necessary to exercise the utmost vigilance on two points.

First, the implementation of the agreement should be closely monitored, as mistrust between the parties on the ground has never been higher. In that regard, we recall that only those terrorist groups explicitly designated by the United Nations are excluded from the cessation of hostilities. Strict interpretation of that point should be observed as, without it, peace cannot be established. The International Syria Support Group task force, which will report to the Security Council, will be the collective judge of its implementation. As long as the parties to the conflict remain the sole judges of violations and the resumption of hostilities, the whole structure will remain fragile.

The second point concerns attaining an effective and sustainable reduction in violence. In order for the inter-Syrian Geneva negotiations to resume on a credible foundation, we must ensure that the obligations recalled in resolution 2254 (2015) and the Munich communiqué — in particular the full, safe, unhindered and unconditional access of humanitarian assistance to affected populations — are fully implemented. As the Secretary-General himself indicated in his letter of 17 February, negotiations can succeed only if based on a credible and solid foundation. It will be up to the Special Envoy to determine whether these conditions are met on 7 March. The resumption of talks will be possible only if the commitments undertaken are scrupulously applied by the regime and the outside Powers that support it. In that regard, we are very concerned about the intensified bombings carried out by Syrian and Russian armed forces right up to the final hours before the entry into force of the cessation of hostilities.

France will encourage the opposition High Negotiations Committee to return to the inter-Syrian negotiation table as soon as the full and lasting implementation of international obligations has been noted, in particular humanitarian access to all besieged areas, as well as the effective implementation of the cessation of hostilities. The High Negotiations Committee is a major stakeholder and plays an essential role in the success of the negotiations. In that context, we deeply regret that it is not mentioned in the text of the resolution, whereas it enjoys and should retain our support.

If the cessation of hostilities holds, an initial step will have been made towards a settlement to the Syrian crisis. Nevertheless, as long as the cessation of hostilities is not supported by political progress towards a transition consistent with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex), it will remain fragile and reversible. In other words, the cessation of hostilities, which is fragile by nature, should move towards a ceasefire, which is more durable.

Resolution 2254 (2015) sets clear objectives. Allow me to briefly recall its terms. A ceasefire can take place only alongside a political process that includes the implementation of the first stages of the transition. When the inter-Syrian negotiations between the regime and the negotiators of the High Negotiations Committee resume, the parties should begin to formulate the terms of a compromise in order to set up a transitional authority with full executive powers, in accordance with the Geneva communiqué. France will continue to contribute fully to the diplomatic efforts of the Council and the International Syria Support Group with a view to allowing diplomacy prove its effectiveness for the benefit of the Syrian people.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing.

Not long ago, the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) held its fourth foreign ministers' meeting in Munich, and took the important decision to expand the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Syria, stop the hostilities and to quickly resume the Geneva talks. Positive results were achieved at the meeting. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi led a delegation to the meeting and made an important contribution to its outcome. Recently, Russia and the United States reached an agreement on cessation of hostilities in Syria, which China appreciates. That agreement demonstrates that the consensus reached at the fourth ISSG foreign ministers' meeting has been implemented.

Today the Council has unanimously adopted resolution 2268 (2016), endorsing the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Syria. That demonstrates the international community's support for the diplomatic efforts of the ISSG members and its firm commitment to a political settlement of the Syrian question. China welcomes this development. Political settlement is the only way out of the Syrian crisis. No matter what the circumstances, it is imperative to stay the course of a political settlement. The international community should take the important opportunity represented by the Council's endorsement of the agreement on a cessation of hostilities in Syria to more vigorously push for the implementation of the existing and important consensus.

First, the relevant parties in Syria should strictly implement the agreement on cessation of hostilities, put an end to fighting and violence within the stipulated time frame, and speed up humanitarian access to relevant Syrian areas so as to create conditions favourable to the prompt resumption of the Geneva talks.

Secondly, the relevant parties in Syria should strictly implement resolution 2254 (2015) and the consensus reached at the fourth ISSG foreign ministers' meeting, put the interests of the country and people first, and quickly resume talks so as to place the destiny and future of Syria firmly into the hands of the Syrian people.

Thirdly, major countries in the region should stop their mutual finger-pointing and instead take concrete action to prevent the deterioration of the situation, and play a constructive role in the forthcoming implementation of the cessation of hostilities and efforts to expand humanitarian assistance.

Fourthly, the international community, including ISSG members, should put peace in Syria and the region first, assume their respective responsibilities and play their due roles in the effective implementation of the consensus reached at the fourth foreign ministers' meeting and resolution 2254 (2015).

China greatly appreciates the mediation efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura and firmly supports the United Nations role as the main channel of mediation in the political resolution of the Syrian question. China stands ready to maintain its positive and constructive role in the political settlement of the Syrian question.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing today and for all of his sterling work in such challenging circumstances.

The United Kingdom welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2268 (2016), endorsing the agreement on a cessation of hostilities in Syria. I want to join others in welcoming the cooperation between the United States and Russia that made this agreement possible. If implemented fully, this agreement could be the most significant step forward in the past five years, a step that brings us closer to an end to the violence and one that brings the conclusion of this conflict into sight, bringing about hope for a political transition. I therefore welcome Special Envoy De Mistura's decision to reconvene rapidly political negotiations on transition, in Geneva on 7 March. It is vital that we seize the impetus created by this agreement. But as set out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/152) on the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015), there are a number of actions still outstanding that need to be taken forward to maximize the prospects for successful negotiations.

First, the task force must agree a transparent monitoring and verification process for the cessation of hostilities, and, in the future, for a ceasefire. Secondly, additional confidence-building measures are still required to show the regime's commitment to the political process. Those must include the release of arbitrarily detained people, especially women and children. Thirdly, we need to see a complete end to the obstruction of medical supplies to besieged and hard-to-reach areas. That practice is completely unacceptable. As we heard in the briefing from Stephen O'Brien (see S/PV.7631) on Wednesday, there has been a significant resumption of humanitarian aid access to besieged areas, and that is welcome. But it is long-overdue, and it is clear that there remain significant needs, including reaching areas of eastern Ghuta. We must begin to see that in the coming days.

There is so much more to do. Russia must turn words into actions and use its unique influence on the Al-Assad regime, its affiliated militias and other backers to abide by this agreement. If they do, some much-needed confidence will be brought to our hopes for a political settlement; if they do not, we will falter again and the spiral of violence will continue. We should not forget that 1,380 civilians have been killed and 5,789 injured by Russian and regime airstrikes since Russia began its campaign in Syria, including attacks on at least three camps for refugees and internally displaced persons. For all uor optimism today, we must therefore recognize that the cessation of hostilities is an overdue milestone. Rather than dwell on our past failures, let us now seize the momentum and see urgent progress aimed at a political transition — away from Al-Assad — and a Government that represents all Syrians. That is the only way to end the longer-term conflict, and in doing so allow us to defeat the Da'esh threat.

Finally, I would like to make clear the United Kingdom's position that it is the Syrian High Negotiations Commission that must represent the Syrian opposition in formal negotiations in Geneva. The Commission represents a broad sweep of the opposition forces fighting in Syria against the tyranny of Al-Assad. They deserve our wholehearted support, which regrettably was not reflected in this resolution.

It is crucial now that all members of the international community work in good faith to implement this resolution and resolution 2254 (2015), alongside the agreements reached in Munich. In doing so, we can ensure that this finally is the year that the bloodshed in Syria comes to an end.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): There are fewer than 10 minutes remaining before a critical moment comes and we take a first and decisive step to put an end to the war on the ground in Syria. Only a few minutes remain for the most crucial phase to begin, and Spain demands that the parties to the conflict and their allies fully comply with resolution 2268 (2016), which we have just adopted.

I am grateful for the agreement reached by the United States and the Russian Federation on the cessation of hostilities in Syria, which has allowed us to adopt this resolution today. Spain is ready to support all United Nations efforts to that end. We are confident in the work being carried out by the International Syria Support Group to the draw the map for the implementation of this agreement and to implement a supervision mechanism. In the days to come, transparency and rigour will be essential elements for the success of this endeavour. After five years of war, we face an extraordinarily complicated theatre of operations in which the slightest provocation can have consequences of enormous scale. That is why we call for strict respect of the terms agreed upon, and I reiterate that. We voted for this resolution with the conviction that it can lead us to a new phase in Syria, thereby contributing to establishing the necessary conditions to provide a political solution to the crisis. We welcome the fact that Syrian authorities and the High Negotiations Commission of the opposition have already joined the agreement.

The Secretary-General was very clear in his recent report (S/2016/152) to the Security Council on the situation in Syria. The fruitless logic of the military path has left us with more than one quarter of a million people dead, the largest humanitarian crisis of our time and a sanctuary to the terrorism of Da'esh and Al-Qaida. The sole alternative to breaking the cycle of violence of the past five years is to implement resolution 2254 (2015), which underscores the importance of the parties to the conflict to adopt confidence-building measures to contribute, first, to the viability of the political process and, secondly, to a sustained ceasefire over time. I would like to highlight two such confidence-building measures, namely, humanitarian access and the release of prisoners. Humanitarian access is already covered in the terms of the cessation of hostilities. Moreover, it is a demand that is supported by a long series of Security Council resolutions. It is indispensable for there to be continued and unhindered access. Restricting the activities of medical and surgical teams cannot be justified under any circumstances, and even less so when there is a cessation of hostilities. The Sectretary-General, on his part, has called for freedom of movement for the civilian population in besieged areas. This resolution also calls for the release of arbitrarily detained individuals, particularly women and children. All along we have asked for an end to indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population. We now trust that resolution 2268 (2016) will make it possible for us to leave behind this tragic chapter of the war in Syria.

However, we must call on the Government of Syria to protect the civilian population, while strictly complying with the standards of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Those are necessary steps to provide credibility to the parties staking everything on a political solution. The fight against terrorism cannot serve as a pretext to keep testing the process of dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations.

Resolution 2254 (2015), which we adopted unanimously barely two months ago, continues to be a valid road map in Syria. The United Nations has played the role we entrusted it. Spain has full confidence in the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, and we thank him sincerely once again for his decided action for peace in Syria. The international community is already prepared for a new scenario of reconciliation in Syria.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): It is zero hours Damascus time, 27 February. By adopting unanimously the new resolution 2268 (2016), we have endorsed in full the cessation of hostilities in Syria announced on 22 February by the United States and the Russian Federation. I welcome efforts by Secretary Kerry and Minister Lavrov, co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, which opened up an opportunity to end this long-lasting conflict. Resolution 2268 (2016) was sponsored by the Russian Federation and the United States, which I find most welcome. The adoption and implementation of resolution 2268 (2016) should lead to the full implementation of the most important resolution, namely, resolution 2254 (2015). It is my hope that the Russia-United States cooperation, as well as cooperation among other partners, will continue and be strengthened in the process of the implementation of both resolutions.

I should now like to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his briefing as well as, most important, his tireless efforts to move the political process forward. Japan welcomes the announcement of the scheduled resumption of intra-Syrian talks on 7 March. As the Special Envoy said, the start and maintenance of the cessation of hostilities and the improvement of the dire humanitarian situation are indispensable elements for the success of those talks.

Japan has provided continuous assistance to Syria for the development of its economy and improvements in the livelihood of the people. It has always been a matter of the highest priority for Japan that the people of Syria be able to enjoy better lives. However, since the crisis began, more than a quarter of a million Syrians have been killed and 4.6 million have fled their country. Japan will continue to work with others towards a lasting political settlement by restoring confidence among the parties through assistance that benefits all Syrians, without marginalizing any groups.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I join previous speakers in welcoming the timely adoption of resolution 2268 (2016). Its unanimous adoption is a testament to the resolve of the Security Council in seeking an end to the bloody conflict in Syria. We also thank Special Envoy De Mistura for his briefing, which provided us with insight into a very crucial week for Syria, one which, hopefully, will begin to define a better future for the men, women and children of Syria.

Malaysia welcomes the announcement of the cessation of hostilities by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), which is scheduled to begin right now. We also welcome the agreement by the Government of Syria and the opposition groups in that regard. With the agreement of all parties to the cessation of hostilities, including allied forces, we now have a real opportunity to reduce violence and end the senseless brutality that the conflict has inflicted upon the Syrian people. The glimmer of hope presented to the Syrian people after much work by the Council, the ISSG and Special Envoy De Mistura over the past few weeks must be made a reality. It cannot be allowed to fail, because military escalation and the continuation of conflict can only serve to inflict more damage on both sides and to prolong the dire humanitarian crisis.

Malaysia was encouraged by the first round of peace talks held by Special Envoy De Mistura late last month. Unfortunately, the peace talks were suspended due to the continued aerial bombardment and the hindering of deliveries of humanitarian aid to people in need. The cessation of hostilities and the breakthrough in humanitarian operations last week give us fresh hope that the peace talks can be resumed. We take note of the planned resumption of talks on 7 March and call upon all the relevant parties to participate in the United Nations-facilitated talks next week. However, we would caution against moving the goalposts too often. We hope that the peace talks scheduled for next Monday will proceed. The peace talks are extremely crucial, and the only solution to the Syrian conflict is through a political settlement. The sooner the relevant key actors accept that, the sooner greater effort could be invested to find a breakthrough to end the conflict and to work for peace. We must therefore now shift our focus to the political route and work towards implementing the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

We are heartened by the breakthrough made by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners in securing safe passage for humanitarian relief missions to the five besieged towns in Syria. We have also seen the United Nations carry out its first airdrop of humanitarian aid to more than 200,000 people in Deyr ez-Zour. Given that breakthrough, my delegation would reiterate that the success in delivering humanitarian relief via airdrops to the besieged areas must be replicated; it should not be a one-off event. In addition, there are other besieged areas inaccessible by humanitarian partners, and access must be granted to those places. We again call upon States with influence on the parties to the conflict to do their utmost to ensure that the sieges end and that humanitarian aid is accessible to all.

We are hopeful that the cessation of hostilities among the relevant parties to the conflict will lead us to the desperately sought-after political solution. It is incumbent upon the Council to stand united in making that happen.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this briefing on the Syrian issue, which has taken up so much of your presidency in the month of February. My delegation also thanks Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura for his briefing.

In voting in favour of resolution 2268 (2016), submitted by the American and Russian delegations, my delegations has once again evidenced its commitment and contribution to the arduous search for a comprehensive, lasting solution to the terrible Syrian tragedy in its humanitarian, security and political dimensions. We welcome the spirit of cooperation shown by the co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group — the United States of America and the Russian Federation — in the drafting of the resolution, which certainly represents a glimmer of hope, however tenuous, for the beleaguered Syrian people, who no longer know where to turn. The resolution is concise in that it pertains to the terms by which the cessation of hostilities is to be observed. It is now past midnight in Damascus, and we hope that the ceasefire will be effective and open up the way for other confidence-building measures as part of the political process in Syria. We welcome the fact that the resolution reiterates the priority of prusing the fight against terrorism and that, in that context, the cessation of hostilities will not apply to the terrorist groups identified by the United Nations, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front, in conformity with resolution 2254 (2015).

Bearing in mind the recent positive steps forward made in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to besieged and hard-to-access areas, we are also pleased to note that the resolution proposes a broad actions to respond to this dimension, particularly the facilitation of humanitarian access under the International Syria Support Group task force, as well as unimpeded access to all parts of Syria, particularly in areas listed in the text. That is why the delegation of Senegal calls on the parties concerned to fully respect the cessation of hostilities in order to strengthen other confidence-building measures aimed at achieving a ceasefire throughout Syria with the support of the international community. In addition to the exchange of information in the framework of the task force, Senegal awaits with interest specific proposals on the monitoring mechanisms which the Secretary-General is to submit to the Security Council.

In the light of all this and the need to support the actions of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and to send a strong message to the parties responsible for one of the gravest humanitarian tragedies of our time, my country decided to give its full support to resolution 2268 (2016). Once again, we thank Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and offer him the full support of the delegation of Senegal in his very complex and sensitive task, in the hope that the resolution we have just adopted will make his task less difficult when the inter-Syrian negotiations resume on 7 March.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Like others, we thank Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura for his briefing and his tireless efforts. The delegation of Ukraine supported resolution 2268 (2016), just adopted by the Security Council, and wholeheartedly hopes that it will serve the purpose of breaking the dangerous pattern of escalation in Syria and help to bring this conflict to an end.

At the same time, we would like to register our disagreement with the language of paragraph 4 of the resolution in the part that recognizing the efforts of the Russian Federation to reach understanding on the terms of the cessation of hostilities. In reality, it is precisely the Russian Federation's support for the Government forces in Syria that have taken the violence to a new level in recent months. Russia is now trying to impose itself as a mediator in the Syrian settlement process. Russian tactics in Syria are similar to those in eastern Ukraine. Like in Ukraine, Russia is stirring up violence in Syria, including by supplying military personnel, providing arms and ammunition, conducting combat operations and spreading false propaganda. As we speak, I have just learned from reports that, with less than one hour left until Syria's ceasefire begins, a Russian air strike just hit the Al-Kinana hospital in Darat Ezza in Aleppo province. The current situation in and around Aleppo has too much in common with the tactics used by the Russian armed forces during the siege of the Ukrainian city of Debaltseve in February 2015 after the signing of the Minsk package of measures.

Regrettably, our proposals to balance the text of paragraph 4 of the draft resolution were not duly reflected. However, preoccupied by the gravity and urgency of the situation in Syria, the Ukrainian delegation decided to cast its vote in favour of the resolution. Our motivation is driven by our recognition of the dire need to reverse this horrific conflict that has devastated Syria and put the entire Middle East on the brink of a larger regional escalation. That arrangement is obviously long overdue, but what matters is that it reflects a wide understanding that the Syrian people cannot wait any longer and deserve peace and most urgent help. Now that we have a glimmer of new hope in Syria, we need tangible practical steps on the ground.

That having been said, we cannot but underscore the importance of the coming days and weeks, which will be defining ones. The parties to the conflict, both inside and outside of Syria, will have to prove with deeds, not words, that they are committed to meeting their obligations. This time there will be no room for political manoeuvres or excuses. There will be only one way — that of setting arms aside and engaging in a serious political process.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): We too thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his briefing, and we commend him for his determination and optimism in carrying forward a very difficult process. We also commend the United States of America and Russia for steering through the cessation of hostilities, which should have taken effect a few minutes ago.

The backdrop to today's discussions is five years of devastation and failure in Syria. Late last year, the Syrian parties were about as far apart as they have ever been. There have been moments of promise, in particular the adoption of resolution 2254 (2015), and subsequent agreements by the International Syria Support Group. Sadly, after each of those moments of promise, we have seen an escalation of fighting as the Syrian Government and its supporters have tried to leverage the situation to their advantage. That has been deeply disturbing and disappointing.

At last, we have an agreement around a cessation of hostilities, which is due to take effect in the coming hours. We welcome that agreement, and were pleased to vote today in support of resolution 2268 (2016), endorsing it. If the cessation of hostilities holds it will be the first time in five years that there has been an agreed pause in the fighting in this bloody civil war. The cessation of hostilities is an important step towards a lasting ceasefire. It gives hope for a reduction in the horrific violence and humanitarian suffering in Syria. If it is to serve a meaningful purpose, parties to the conflict and relevant International Syria Support Group members must demonstrate a sustained commitment to making it work in practice.

We recognize that the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the Al-Nusra Front and other Security Council-designated terrorist organizations must continue, but that will inevitably open the risk that the wrong targets may be struck, be it deliberately or inadvertently. That in turn could trigger an unravelling of the cessation of hostilities and a return to widespread conflict. All those who subscribe to this agreement must act with extra caution to prevent such an outcome, and in particular to avoid military activity against non-designated groups, civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Today's resolution affirms the close linkage between a lasting ceasefire and a parallel political process. We hope that the cessation of hostilities agreement will be remembered in history as the beginning of the end of mass violence in Syria. We were pleased, therefore, to hear from Mr. De Mistura that will inter-Syrian talks will resume on 7 March and that that process will be an inclusive one.

We think it right that the Council has today sent a message to the Syrian parties that they must participate in those negotiations on a political transition, and that they must engage in those negotiations in good faith. We have sympathy for those who promote confidence-building measures to build the strength of the platform upon which these negotiations must take place. At the same time, the parties should not insist on preconditions designed to scuttle negotiations before they begin. All those involved in the conflict have a responsibility to bring about and sustain conditions that are conducive to constructive negotiations.

The full implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including the one we have adopted today, remains critical. That will require a genuine commitment in the coming days and weeks to ceasing hostilities, in accordance with the terms of the agreement the Council has endorsed today. It also means urgently allowing full, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian aid to those who need it. That must include urgently needed medical assistance. We hope we will also see the release of detainees, particularly women, children and the elderly.

Now is when the rubber meets the road, when there must be hard decisions on difficult issues. Now is not the time for political red lines. No side will get everything it wants, and that includes the Syrian Government, the opposition and regional and international supporters. Any viable solution will be imperfect. Any political solution will require compromise. We stand ready to support Mr. De Mistura in his efforts to resume the negotiations in Geneva, and we encourage the Council to do all it can to assist him.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to thank Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura for being steadfast and maintaining the hope that we could arrive at the point we have reached today.

Angola supports today's unanimous adoption of resolution 2268 (2016), on a cessation of hostilities in Syria. It is a positive and long-awaited step forward in the quest to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis, and we will continue to support it, especially the confidence-building measures aimed at establishing the conditions necessary for the Syrian-led political transition and dialogue that we in the Council have never ceased calling for.

The establishment of an international task force to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access and a ceasefire in Syria is a timely initiative, given the worsening refugee crisis, the brutality and the loss of the lives of more than a quarter of a million people that we have experienced. Allowing humanitarian agencies to conduct their work, which can be effective only with a cessation of hostilities, is crucial to stemming the growing flow of refugees and the horror of the hostilities that we have witnessed. We sincerely hope that the cessation will hold under the monitoring mechanism and we look forward to a resumption of the intra-Syrian talks under the auspices of the Special Envoy, now announced for 7 March.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for the Special Envoy and wish him every success in the next round of negotiations. We hope that this time the cessation of hostilities will hold and that our focus will shift to building bridges between the various factions in Syria, based on the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015), and to uniting our efforts to neutralize and further work to eliminate the threat of hostilities from terrorist groups. We may then be able to move forward in order to build momentum for the political track, while encouraging the holding of the ceasefire and a move towards peace and stability in Syria and the region.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Uruguay, I would like to thank Mr. De Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, not just for his briefing just now but also for his untiring spirit, unceasing efforts and his determination to advance the mission entrusted to him by the Secretary-General and the Security Council. Our thanks include his team as well, and we would like to reiterate our confidence in their work. The Uruguayan delegation would also like to thank the United States and the Russian Federation not only for drafting resolution 2268 (2016), which we have just adopted, but also for their efforts in helping to reach this new stage in a conflict that has already gone on far too long.

On Wednesday, the Government of Uruguay issued a communiqué in which, essentially, we expressed our satisfaction with the recent announcement by the United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, and Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, as co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, regarding their signing of an agreement on the entry into force of a cessation of hostilities in Syria. Uruguay believes it is an important step forward in the efforts to put an end to the violence and facilitate humanitarian access in Syria, particularly to besieged areas. In that regard, we would like to call on the parties to respect the commitments they have undertaken and to work to effectively comply with and implement them.

This is a sign of hope for the Syrian people and an essential step towards achieving the effective implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). My delegation voted in favour of the adoption of both resolution 2254 (2015) and resolution 2268 (2016), in the belief that this is a first step towards achieving a lasting ceasefire, which should make it possible to advance a political process that will enable us to end this long conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We would first like to commend and acknowledge the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and to congratulate him on his persistent efforts to work for peace in the terrible conflict that the people of Syria have endured.

Today the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela voted in favour of resolution 2268 (2016), adopted unanimously by the Security Council, in the belief that the text reaffirms the view that a solution to the armed conflict in the country must be political, peaceful and negotiated. My country will support any measures aimed at building confidence and peace. In that regard, we welcome the announcement that a cessation of hostilities is just about to take effect, and we hope that all the parties involved will comply strictly with the agreement. We are pleased that the stakeholders who possess influence on the crisis in Syria are displaying the political will needed to pave the way to the peace that the Syrian people long for. We must act decisively, and we believe that this quest for a space in which to dialogue that has motivated the Russian and United States delegations is an encouraging sign in support to the efforts of the United Nations, Special Envoy De Mistura and the Security Council.

We would like to express our appreciation and support for the diplomatic efforts to achieve a firm and lasting peace in Syria by all the parties involved. We also welcome Mr. De Mistura's announcement of a resumption of intra-Syrian peace talks scheduled for 7 March, and we hope they will include representatives of every sector and group involved in the conflict and in fighting terrorism. We are aware that identifying shared elements that will enable the groundwork for political negotiations to be laid is a difficult task, but it is a highly important one that will require the commitment of all parties if we are to make concrete progress in helping the people of Syria. We reiterate our call for peace negotiations to continue without preconditions so as to enable the Syrian people to overcome the tragedy of the war that has made them victims of the actions of the armed groups and terrorists operating in their country.

We have said since the beginning that, in order to end the war, the peace process must include all parties and that the Government of President Bashar al-Assad must be recognized in this resolution. Venezuela believes that the legitimate Government of President Al-Assad is a key actor in the political equation of the solution of the conflict. Excluding it from the talks would be condemning them to failure. We also believe that the Security Council has no authority to rule on the legitimacy of the Syrian Government. That is up to the people of Syria alone, and is a matter of respect for the sovereignty of each country and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The people of Syria have their reaffirmed political independence with the assistance of the international community, free of foreign interference and imposed solutions that favour interests other than their own. In that regard, Venezuela reiterates its support for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Syria, as well as its right to self-determination, in accordance with international law, including the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria is closely linked to the cessation of hostilities. We therefore welcome the fact that in recent days humanitarian assistance has reached at least part of the population in urgent need of food and medicine. We understand that it is not enough and, as we have said, much more must be done in the humanitarian context. Nevertheless, this concern is included in paragraph 6 of the resolution and enjoys the support of the International Syria Support Group. We hope that all parties will allow the end to the siege of hundreds of thousands of people.

As has been agreed, the cessation of hostilities does not apply to terrorist groups that are bleeding Syria dry, such as Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham. It is important to note that the Syrian Government, with the support of the Russian Federation, is tirelessly fighting the aforementioned terrorist organizations and their associates. These terrorist groups threaten international peace and security by expanding their actions to other countries of the Middle East, North Africa and other regions. The international community must provide its full support to the Syrian authorities and all groups fighting the scourge of terrorism. In this context, efforts must be redoubled to prevent the financing, training and transfer of weapons to these groups, as well as their use and encouragement as instruments to overthrow Governments in accordance with the resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly.

Finally, our country will remain committed to achieving a peace in Syria that will bring an end to this dreadful conflict on the basis of a political negotiated solution under the leadership of the Syrian people, its Government and the institutions, thereby guaranteeing the sovereignty and independence of that kindred country.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I also thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan De Mistura, for participating by video-teleconference from Geneva.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, the Syrian Government has spared no effort to reach a political settlement. It has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment and will pursue that approach on the basis of its desire to end the bloodshed of our Syrian people, restore security and stability and implement the will of the Syrian people. The Syrian Government has officially announced its acceptance of the cessation of hostilities on the basis of ongoing military counter-terrorism efforts against Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and its affiliates, and other terrorist organizations linked to Al-Qaeda, in accordance with the Russian-American joint declaration, which the Government of Syria considers to be an important step towards a political settlement. We reaffirm our readiness to contribute to the implementation of the cessation of hostilities.

To ensure the successful and timely implementation of the cessation of hostilities, the Government of Syria continues to coordinate with the Russian side to identify the areas and armed groups to be included in the cessation of hostilities as long as it remains in effect. In this regard, we stress once again the importance of controlling the borders, stopping the support provided by certain countries to armed groups and preventing those groups from strengthening their capacities or changing their locations, in order to avoid any eventuality that could undermine the agreement. The Government also reserves the right of its armed forces to respond to any breach of the agreement by those terrorist groups against Syrian citizens or the Syrian armed forces.

The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic participated in the recent Geneva talks in good faith and full earnest in order to reach a political settlement to the crisis in my country, Syria. Today, I reiterate the readiness of the Government of Syria to participate actively in all sincere efforts to reach a political settlement in which Syrians and Syrians alone shall decide on their future and their choices through a Syrian-led dialogue among Syrians, without foreign intervention. That would safeguard Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, pursuant to the second preambular paragraph of resolution 2268 (2016), just adopted.

On the basis of the foregoing, the ball is again in the court of the other parties, which have yet to prove their good intentions and commitment to facilitating the political settlement of the crisis in Syria — without imposing preconditions on the Syrian people and without interfering in our domestic affairs — by ending their support and justifications for terrorism and abandonging all actions that could hinder political settlement. The Syrians are invited to work on strenthening national reconciliation and to make every effort to defeat terrorism and to rebuild a newSyria, united in its territory and people, and to protect its sovereignty and its national independent stability.

In her statement our colleague, the representative of the United States, said that there are no Al-Nusra Front forces in the town of Daraya, located in a suburb of Damascus. That is incorrect in essence and in practice. There are Al-Nusra Front elements in Daraya. I have circulated to members of the Council a list of the names of hundreds of terrorist fighters who were killed in Syria in 2015. Most are from Al-Nusra Front and Da'esh, and some were killed in Daraya.

I recall that, as the experts of the Council's subsidiary committees are well aware, the real name of the Al-Nusra Front is Al-Qaeda in the Levant. We are talking about the Al-Qaeda organization. Who is the leader of Al-Nusra Front? He is Abu Mohammad Al-Julani, the former deputy of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the leader of Da'esh, who went his separate way and established the Al-Nusra Front in Syria. The Al-Nusra Front is in effect Al-Qaeda, and as its leader Al-Julani has sworn allegiance to Ayman Al-Zawahiri, the head of Al-Qaeda. Al-Nusra Front is thereby affiliated with Al-Qaeda.

Al-Zawahiri appointed a Saudi mufti, Abdullah Al-Muhaysini, to be the mufti for the Al-Nusrah Front in Idlib, with the authority to address issues such issues as the eating of liver and the beheading of people. In other words, the head of an Al-Qaida affiliate has appointed a person who is on the list of designated individuals and entities sponsoring terrorism to be the religious authority in Idlib in Syria. This is the true face of the Al-Nusrah Front, even if some are trying to overlook the facts and have it be considered as an entity working to fight terrorism in Syria.

The Al-Nusrah Front is in fact part of Ahrar Al-Sham, yet another terrorist organization. Created by the Turkish intelligence services, Ahrar Al-Sham works in the north of Syria near the border with Turkey.

Finally, some started to violate resolution 2268 (2016) the moment it was adopted. They have also been saying things that have nothing to do with the contents of the resolution. Therefore, I call upon the representatives of those States that have spoken of my country in an inappropriate manner, in violation of the provisions of the resolution, to start abiding by the resolution in this very Chamber before abiding by it outside.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7635

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7635th meeting

Monday, 29 February 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ramírez Carreño	(Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of))
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Steinmeier.

Mr. Steinmeier: It is an honour for me to address the Security Council today as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the largest regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

First of all, allow me to pay tribute to the late Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. His "Agenda for Peace" (S/24111) not only marked a milestone for the international order after the Cold War. It was also Boutros-Ghali who recognized the important role of regional organizations in conflict settlement. He laid the foundation for the strong relationship between the United Nations and the OSCE — a relationship we would like to strengthen even further in 2016.

Nobody will deny that the challenges we are facing are enormous. As an European organization, I have to start with our own region. Violent crises and conflicts surround us, even on our own continent of Europe — and it is not only about Ukraine. In a very real sense, the Russian annexation of Crimea brought back to our agenda concerns about our common European security. At the same time, violence has spiked in regions of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Oppression, terror, religious radicalism and regional rivalries have led to immeasurable human suffering, especially in Syria. The brutal conflicts in the Middle East have also reached the European continent. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes and are seeking shelter in Europe, many of them, as members know, in Germany.

All of those developments are challenging our common security more fundamentally than we long thought possible. Maintaining international peace and security, that is what the Charter of the United Nations provides for; while a new era of democracy, peace and unity in Europe was the vision in the Charter of Paris. However, this vision of a Europe whole and free has not yet materialized and, even worse, the principles of international law, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations and OSCE documents, seem to be coming under more and more pressure. How should we respond? What should our guiding principles be in these uncertain times?

First, let us face this world with a realistic eye — with the eye of today not of yesterday. We are not reliving the Cold War, and we should not talk as if we were. The world of today is different; its conflicts are of a new kind — more complex, with more actors and more conflicting interests — so yesterday's arguments are, from my point of view, not only inappropriate; they are counterproductive.

Secondly, I am convinced that the principles to which we have all agreed in the United Nations and the OSCE, such as the territorial integrity and sovereign equality of nations, must still form the bedrock of how we live together as nations. These commitments still form the basis for overcoming divisions, provided that all States muster the necessary political will.

Thirdly, we need strong multilateral organizations to help safeguard and implement these principles, to give us tools for conflict resolution, and to provide us with opportunities for debate to overcome our differences. The United Nations was created to do exactly that, and the same holds for the OSCE. I firmly believe that these two organizations continue to give us the best tools we have to shape the future of a rules-based international order and to prevent the fragility of our time from turning into perpetual disorder. That is why these two institutions are so important, particularly in our turbulent times. We want the OSCE to help us overcome the fragile security situation, in close cooperation with the United Nations. Let me highlight some focal areas of our chairmanship.

The first is Ukraine. The developments in and around Ukraine have shown how indispensable the OSCE is when it comes to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, as the Charter of the United Nations says. Without the OSCE and particularly the courageous men and women of the Special Monitoring Mission we would not have made the progress we have seen on military de-escalation and at least a partial withdrawal of weapons. However, we remain deeply concerned over the continuing violations of the ceasefire and the restrictions of access for the Mission. I strongly believe that implementing the Minsk agreements is the only way towards a sustainable political solution, and I call on both sides represented in the Council to live up to their responsibilities. Together with our French colleagues, we remain committed to supporting this process within the Normandy format, and I count on the support of the Council in this regard.

Secondly, I would like to highlight conflicts that are often referred to as "frozen" or "protracted". I believe that we should not adopt this kind of fatalism. For many years, these conflicts have brought hardship to the people affected and stagnation to the regions involved. During our OSCE chairmanship, we want to make every effort to return to more constructive approaches, to stabilize ceasefires, and to rebuild trust by building confidence in small but tangible steps.

In the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, we are concerned about the high number of deadly incidents along the line of contact and the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We need to intensify efforts under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group. We must find ways to reduce the number of casualties quickly, and we should not be disheartened in seeking a lasting solution to the conflict on the basis of the principles of territorial integrity and the non-use of force.

In Georgia, we have seen at least some progress on practical cooperation between the sides. I want to commend the efforts undertaken by the United Nations, jointly with the OSCE and the European Union, in the Geneva international discussions. We want to underpin this momentum with more confidence-building measures and humanitarian action. We will also use the chairmanship to revive the 5+2 negotiations on the Transnistria conflict.

My third point concerns security- and confidence-building measures. Whether we look at Ukraine, Russia or Turkey, we are currently seeing increased military activities and a high risk of military incidents between OSCE member States. In these times, confidence- and security-building measures are more important than ever. One important element is the Vienna Document. The Ukraine conflict has revealed that it needs to be updated substantially. Progress will be difficult, of course, when confidence is low, but I am convinced that the proposals we have made would lead to better crisis prevention and risk reduction. On the basis of these confidence-building measures, I do hope that we will eventually return to a broader dialogue on European security. We should adhere to the long-term vision of renewed arms control and cooperative security in Europe.

The OSCE and the United Nations share the task of preventing armed conflicts. I believe we should make every effort to strengthen OSCE capabilities in this field, from early warning to crisis management to post-conflict rehabilitation. We will also address the role of women in conflict management and the protection of women in violent conflicts, in line with resolution 1325 (2000). The experience of the United Nations in all these areas can enrich this process. I believe that we are more likely to be successful if we work closely together and combine our toolboxes.

The same is true when it comes to addressing the many other global challenges we face, from terrorism and extremism to organized crime. I believe that the pressing issue of migration should figure more prominently on our agenda. I welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to organize a global summit on migration in September. The OSCE has a lot of expertise in this field, from human rights standards and best practices in labour migration to combatting human trafficking. That is why we want to discuss how the OSCE can contribute to the international efforts, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1).

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are top priorities of our chairmanship. I believe that we need to intensify the fight against discrimination, racism, xenophobia and intolerance throughout Europe, including in my own country. In Germany, people's overwhelming readiness to help arriving refugees has recently been overshadowed by xenophobic assaults. These are despicable acts that we must not and will not tolerate.

Finally, I would like to highlight the fact that security within the OSCE area is intrinsically tied to the security of its neighbours. The OSCE is a unique organization, but my hope is that its principles can provide a glimmer of hope to other regions, particularly in the Middle East. Let us remember that the road to

Helsinki began when the Cold War was at its coldest. At the start of the negotiations, who would have dared to hope that at the end of it, the Berlin Wall would fall?

Of course, one cannot transfer a security architecture to another region. But perhaps our experiences can highlight useful principles and processes, and maybe they can encourage the parties in the Middle East to live up to their responsibility and explore new paths to political settlements. This is a discussion that we started at the OSCE conference in Amman last year and on which we would like to build.

Germany is fully aware of the responsibility attached to assuming the OSCE chairmanship in these turbulent times. I am convinced that we have to remain firm with respect to our principles. At the same time, I believe that we need to promote dialogue and a cooperative approach so as to overcome our differences and put us back on track towards restored security.

We should remind ourselves of the spirit of Helsinki: persistent dialogue and a cooperative approach can pay off in the end. This very hope is expressed in our motto for 2016: "Renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust and restoring security". This embraces the spirit of the United Nations Charter. Rebuilding trust will not be easy, and there is no quick fix. But if we want to be able to look future generations in the eye and say that we did everything possible to return to peace in Europe, we have to work on it together, in the OSCE and in the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Steinmeier for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to welcome the presence in the Council today of His Excellency Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, and to thank him for his particularly enlightening statement. On behalf of my country, I should like also warmly to congratulate Germany on its assumption of the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) this year. Of course, we intend to closely cooperate, with full confidence, with our German friends in this body in the months to come. They know that they can count on our full support in the implementation of their programme of work, which is rightly focused on the issues he mentioned, including the relaunching of dialogue, the rebuilding of trust and the restoration of security.

I wish to touch on two points: the central role of the OSCE in our efforts to put an end to the Ukrainian crisis, and the priority challenges on which the OSCE should, in a more general manner, be concentrating its efforts.

The crisis unfolding today in eastern Ukraine is one of the most serious and dangerous violations of the founding principles of the OSCE, as adopted in Helsinki more than 40 years ago. It is therefore fitting that this issue has dominated the agenda of the organization for more than two years now. The OSCE has risen to the challenge and shouldered its responsibilities by deploying swiftly a Special Monitoring Mission and playing a central role in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. The OSCE must continue to play this core role in the context of the international efforts aimed at resolving the crisis. Our goal here remains a return of control for Ukraine across its internationally recognized borders, which includes reinstating its authority over Crimea. Our position on this issue, which is in keeping with international law, will not change.

We welcome the fact that the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine was extended several days ago for an additional year upon the initiative of the German chairmanship. Germany's chairmanship means that we can strengthen the links between the various crisis-management tools available, including the Normandy format, which is the priority negotiation format for parties, and the OSCE, which is providing follow-up on the ground and mediation on a daily basis.

For France, resolving the Ukrainian crisis remains a priority. We are determined to continue our efforts in the Normandy format to ensure the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, which represents the only possible framework to achieve a peaceful settlement. This is one of the messages that Minister Steinmeier conveyed, alongside his French counterpart, during their joint visit to Kyiv last week. In terms of content, our position is clear: we are deeply worried about the ongoing violations of the ceasefire, whose number has increased in recent weeks, and we deplore the piecemeal application of the Minsk agreements on the ground.

The Minsk agreements are an international commitment whose provisions must be implemented by all parties. This includes the effective implementation of the ceasefire, which is the only possible basis for moving forward, as well as the implementation of the other measures planned for by the Minsk framework, namely, the adoption of a constitutional reform on decentralization and a special electoral law for Donbas, given the fact that the definition of a political horizon is the only way to ensure that the security situation remains stable.

All of these questions will be on the agenda of the next ministerial meeting in the Normandy format, to be held on Thursday in Paris. This will be a crucial time with respect to our mediation and to the conflict, and all parties must shoulder their responsibilities. We call upon other members of the Council to urgently convey this message. In the meantime, more generally, it is vital that the Special Monitoring Mission of the OSCE be in a position to fully and without hindrance discharge its mandate. We once again call for respect of the freedom of movement of the monitors and firmly condemn any violation of that principle, be it through intimidation, threats or prohibition of access to certain areas. We should also think about how to give the organization the ability to better monitor the border between Russia and Ukraine and to set up a new advance presence in areas currently under separatist control. The commitment of the OSCE to ensuring security for local elections in Donbas will also be necessary, on the basis of arrangements yet to be determined.

Beyond Ukraine, the OSCE remains a key instrument for promoting peace and security in Europe in a context characterized by a broad spectrum of threats. This situation should encourage its 57 members to give up political posturing and embrace once again the Helsinki spirit of which Minister Steinmeier just spoke, which enabled a shared vision of security in Europe and which was reiterated in the 2010 Astana commemorative declaration of Heads of State and Government, entitled "Towards a security community", based on the three well-known dimensions on which the organization focuses.

In this context, we believe that the work of the OSCE must today emphasize the following issues in particular.

First, let me touch on the settlement of regional conflicts. Beyond the Ukrainian crisis, we cannot accept the continued existence of frozen conflicts throughout Europe, be it in Nagorno Karabakh, Transdniestria or Georgia, which was mentioned earlier. We share the belief of the German chairmanship that the OSCE's role is key in all of these situations, within established mediation formats, so as to promote dialogue and re-establish confidence.

I turn now to the issue of bolstering the OSCE's capacities in the cycle of conflict. Conflict prevention is an issue on which we deem it not only possible but also urgent to make headway together. Here we welcome the decision of the German chairmanship to attach priority importance to arms control and the adoption of confidence-building measures during this year, in which important timelines are coming up with respect to the Vienna Document and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

With respect to upholding the vital importance of the democracy and human rights pillar in the work of the OSCE, although a multidimensional approach has always been at the heart of the OSCE's work, we are nevertheless concerned at the increasing tendency on the part of certain members to politicize or even reject consideration of issues related to the human dimension. The approach taken by the German chairmanship of relaunching work in this area while focusing on issues such as combating discrimination, racism, xenophobia and intolerance is welcome, on the understanding that such work cannot overshadow the efforts that must be made in the area of democracy and human rights.

With regard to developing the central role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to certain emerging challenges — I am thinking in particular about migration, combatting radicalization and even climate change — it is important with all of those issues, which are so important for European security, that the OSCE work towards specific responses beyond public posturing. We fully support the desire of the German chairmanship to encourage the Organization to focus on those areas of expertise, such as in the fight against human trafficking in the context of migration, for example. Particular attention should be paid to the impact of climate change on security. We think that would be quite timely, following the Paris agreement.

I conclude my statement by recalling the common ground that exists between the activities of the OSCE and the United Nations. Whether it be in the field or in their respective missions in the Balkans, the Caucasus or Central Asia, they must always act in an integrated manner. There is also common ground in terms of principles with the defence of a common approach that encompasses security, development and human rights. France is convinced that the founding principles of the OSCE remain more relevant than ever to guarantee security in Europe. Unlike those who believe today that there is a need to abandon or change such principles, we think that it important to collectively mobilize to ensure those principles are upheld.

Once again, on behalf of my country I would like to wish Germany every success as it assumes the chairmanship and pledge France's resolve to support its programme of work at the head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am honoured to take the floor to speak on the last day of Venezuela's presidency of the Council.

(*spoke in English*)

I would first like to welcome the Foreign Minister of Germany, Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to the Security Council. I thank him for his comprehensive briefing on the priorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2016 in his capacity as its Chairperson-in-Office.

Japan became the first OSCE partner for cooperation almost 25 years ago, in 1992. Since then, Japan has always participated in OSCE summits and ministerial councils at a high level. We already hosted four Japan-OSCE conferences and we are convinced that Asia and Europe have a lot to learn from each other. With the members of the OSCE, Japan shares fundamental values, such as freedom, democracy and basic human rights. Japan will continue to be an active partner with the OSCE.

I wish to touch upon the situation in and around Ukraine, which Minister Steinmeier referred to. First of all, we will not accept any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in Ukraine or any other country or region in the world. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine must be respected. We commend the dedicated efforts made thus far by the OSCE and its Chairperson-in-Office on Ukrainian issues. The role played by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) continues to be critical. In order to support this Mission, Japan has contributed €2 million and has been sending a regional expert to the SMM since last August. We are concerned that the SMM continues to report systematic disruption of access to certain areas. Japan would like to stress that SMM observers must be given full and unrestricted access to the entire conflict zone.

This month marks the one-year anniversary of the signing of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. However, the situation in Ukraine is far from a final resolution. It is unfortunate that the number of violations of ceasefire agreements reported by the SMM has increased recently. The Minsk agreements are the only guidelines for the improvement of the situation in Ukraine. Japan urges all parties to fully and promptly implement the Minsk agreements.

Counter-terrorism is one of the areas in which the OSCE is playing an important role. We believe that the strengthening of border control is among the most effective counter-terrorism measures. That is why Japan has been financially supporting the OSCE Border Management Staff College since 2013. I wish to add that Japan values cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations under the framework of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Finally, I wish Minister Steinmeier every success during his chairmanship and assure him of Japan's support to him and to the OSCE.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by recognizing the presence in the Chamber of, and express my gratitude to, the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gernmany, Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

For Uruguay, cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations is an essential component of the structure of international relations. As a member of strong regional organizations that have long been in existence, such as the Organization of American States and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Uruguay believes that the role played by regional organizations is very important. We believe that this role will again be a central focus, for example in the work that the Organization will be doing to support the peacebuilding process in Colombia, specifically with the participation in that process by the States members of CELAC.

We greatly appreciate the value of the role played by the OSCE as a platform for dialogue in a very vast region. In that region, issues related to security, early warnings, the settlement of conflicts, the management of crises and post-conflict rehabilitation are all of crucial importance. In general terms, we share the values, principles and objectives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In particular, we value its contribution on the ground to addressing the various areas of conflict that fall within its remit. We believe that the United Nations and the OSCE share work in a number of similar areas and that cooperation between the two entities should always be a part of the principles of both organizations.

Finally, I would like to firmly reaffirm that Uruguay understands that the principle of the territorial integrity of States is a fundamental pillar in international relations.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, on his assumption of the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and by thanking him for his very complete briefing on the priorities of the OSCE for this year. I would also like to thank him for his comments with regard to former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and for his recognition of Mr. Boutros-Ghali's efforts to realize peace in the wake of the Cold War.

We have often insisted on the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we place high value and importance on the efforts of the OSCE to re-establish stability in conflict zones in Europe and in Asia. I would cite, in particular, the conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Ukraine and elsewhere.

Progress has been made as a result of OSCE efforts in the areas of preventive diplomacy, mediation and good offices, and we would encourage the OSCE to continue its efforts. We believe that the role of the OSCE should be complementary to that of the United Nations, and that the latter should contribute to strengthening OSCE efforts undertaken within the framework of its mandate. We also support the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation with our Mediterranean partners in the light of the close link between the countries of the Mediterranean and the European continent. I would cite in particular such issues as the Syrian crisis, the need to re-establish stability in Libya, and the fight against the terrorism and extremism that threaten the aspirations of the peoples of the region.

Moreover, it is necessary to strengthen dialogue among civilizations and religions, and to address issues related to migration, the protection of refugees and the trafficking of human beings in the Mediterranean region. In that context, we particularly appreciate the efforts of the OSCE to pool international efforts with a view to reaching a sustainable solution in Ukraine, in accordance with the Minsk agreements. We believe that those agreements provide the best framework within which to achieve a sustainable peace. In that context, the implementation of the ceasefire is particularly important, as are the necessary constitutional reforms and the organization of elections in the Donbas region. And let us not forget the need to respond to the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in cooperation with all stakeholders, without exception. Egypt welcomes the decline in hostile acts, which helps to provide conditions that are favourable to peace and stability. It is essential that all parties honour their commitments in accordance with the Minsk agreements, and we urge them to engage in dialogue and to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict that takes into consideration the aspiration of their peoples.

Finally, we would be extremely pleased to see strengthened cooperation with the OSCE in order to arrive at a common vision on a number of issues, including Islamophobia in Europe, dialogue among civilizations and religions, as well as the combat against terrorism and extremism. The latter two constitute two of the greatest security threats we face today. We call for strengthened joint efforts that include the participation of all parties and organizations concerned, including the OSCE, in order to eradicate terrorism. Those efforts should be carried out using a comprehensive approach that is not limited to only security and military solutions, but that includes cultural and economic aspects as well. That will help to improve the lives of all the populations in the region. In that vein, Egypt, which is a Mediterranean partner, will spare no effort to achieve our shared goals.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): At the outset, I join my other colleagues in congratulating Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, on his assumption of the position of Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for 2016, and welcome him to the

Security Council. My delegation is grateful for his briefing, which clearly outlined the priorities of the OSCE under Germany's chairmanship.

Malaysia welcomes the reaffirmation by the Chairperson-in-Office to continue the close cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations. Over the years, the OSCE has proven its relevance and resilience as the world's largest regional security organization. Its inclusive and cooperative nature is its key strength in responding to various security threats and challenges in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. We greatly value its contribution and commend the holistic approach of the OSCE to dealing with wide-ranging security challenges, including conflict prevention, conflict management, combating terrorism, arms control and ensuring respect for human rights.

The significant role of the OSCE was thrust into the limelight with the crisis in Ukraine. The OSCE's engagement in Ukraine through its Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, its participation in the Trilateral Contact Group, and the observer mission at the Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk, deserve the Council's strong support. We acknowledge the significant progress made in Ukraine relating to military de-escalation and the withdrawal of weapons. However, we remain deeply concerned that the agreed ceasefire remains fragile and that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission still does not have access to the entire conflict zone, particularly the rebel-held areas.

We strongly urge all relevant parties to abide by the obligations laid down by the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements last year, which was endorsed by the Council in resolution 2202 (2015). We wish to see the full cooperation of all parties with the OSCE to enable it to carry out its mandate. Malaysia also calls on the parties to intensify efforts to implement outstanding provisions of the package of measures, including releasing all hostages, withdrawing foreign troops and weapons, allowing humanitarian access, and organizing local elections in the conflict areas.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend the role played by the OSCE in the aftermath of the downing of flight MH-17 in eastern Ukraine, including in facilitating the recovery and investigation efforts despite the challenging security situation on the ground.

With respect to the various frozen conflicts, including in Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus and Moldova, we hope that the focus on dialogue, confidence-building measures and mediation by the German chairmanship will provide new impetus towards resolving the conflicts, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, various United Nations resolutions, as well as the Helsinki Final Act. We reiterate the need for the conflicting parties to respect the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty, and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory, and to focus on the de-escalation of conflict and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Malaysia recognizes and fully supports the stabilizing role played by the OSCE in the Western Balkans, including its missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. The OSCE has been vital in building institutions and promoting reconciliation in the region, and has brought about great strides in political, judiciary, electoral, economic and social reforms in post-conflict societies. I wish to also highlight and welcome the conference organized by the OSCE earlier this month in Vienna to identify strategies to counter intolerance against Muslims in the OSCE regions. We commend the priority accorded by the OSCE to address discrimination, racism and xenophobia, particularly in view of the rising sentiment of Islamophobia in the OSCE regions.

In conclusion, Malaysia reiterates its support for the OSCE and the priorities set out by the Chairperson-in-Office to renew dialogue, rebuild trust, and restore security in the region. We wish Germany success for its chairmanship, and we reaffirm our continued commitment to cooperate closely with the OSCE in maintaining peace and security in the region, under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank Foreign Minister Steinmeier for his briefing. We look forward to his return to the Security Council in his capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, permanently, before too long. In the meantime, he has our full support, both in Vienna and here in New York, in taking forward the priorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) this year.

Like the United Nations, the OSCE was founded on the principles of dialogue and respect for peace and stability. Together, the two organizations are therefore at the forefront of the rules-based international system. Sadly, as the Council well knows, that system is seldom left unchallenged, so it is incumbent upon both organizations to work closely together to advance peace and security, and in doing so to uphold the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki principles. That strong cooperation is most clearly seen in our response to the continuing crisis in Ukraine. At the outset, I wish to reaffirm the United Kingdom's full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and our commitment to the return of Crimea to its rightful place as part of Ukraine. I would also like to take this opportunity to express the United Kingdom's gratitude for the leading role played by Germany, and by the German OSCE chairmanship, in the Normandy group, and in support of the Special Monitoring Mission and the Trilateral Contact Group.

One year since our previous meeting on the OSCE (see S/PV.7391), can we really say that the overall situation has changed for the better in the east of Ukraine? That meeting focused on the regular breaches of the ceasefire, the use of heavy weapons and the continued presence of convoys crossing the international border. To that list one can now add the unacceptable aggression directed against OSCE monitors. I am saddened and deeply worried to say that, one year later, we seem no closer to a resolution of the crisis. Since the crisis began, over 9,000 people have lost their lives, and over 3 million are now in need of humanitarian assistance. It is clear that that toll will only continue to grow unless a truly sustainable ceasefire is put in place and all sides meet their Minsk commitments in full. To that end, three clear steps must be taken.

First, it is imperative that the Monitoring Mission, ably directed by Ambassador Apakan, be permitted to carry out its mandate in full. The threats and aggressive behaviour towards monitors must end. The Mission must have unrestricted access to all of Ukraine, especially those parts of the border with Russia not under Ukraine's control. The Russian Federation should use its influence on the separatists to ensure that that happens without delay, as they it is obliged to do.

Secondly, while there have been some welcome exchanges of prisoners over the last year, at least 134 Ukrainian prisoners remain in detention. We again call on Russia to release all illegally detained Ukrainian citizens, including those held in Russia and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. Those include Nadiya Savchenko and Oleg Sentsov. We also reiterate that all hostages and illegally detained persons related to the crisis in and around Ukraine must be released, as stipulated under the Minsk agreements.

Thirdly, even more important, what is most needed is a truly sustainable ceasefire and genuine political will to restore Ukrainian sovereignty. The Russian Federation must demonstrate that will and live up to its international commitments. It must withdraw its weapons and personnel and use its considerable influence over the separatists to bring an end to the crisis and prevent the deaths of more people. That is the best way to end the fear and suffering of ordinary people in eastern Ukraine and to allow the Ukrainian Government to focus on much-needed programmes of governance and reform.

Until those steps are taken, we will be working with our European Union partners to ensure that sanctions remain in place. The onus is on Russia to demonstrate a clear commitment to act in line with the principles that guide the OSCE, the Council and other international organizations.

Finally, beyond Ukraine, we in the Security Council should not lose sight of the need to work closely with the German OSCE chairmanship to resolve other issues affecting the region. Those include protecting fundamental freedoms, which continue to come under growing pressure in some OSCE States, addressing the need for greater military transparency and tackling the protracted conflicts that continue to blight the lives of people across the OSCE region, most notably in Georgia. We need dialogue based on respect for, and the implementation of, commitments. Without that we face continuing deadlock, which is damaging and debilitating to all sides. Russian actions in Ukraine cast a shadow over efforts to build confidence and security across OSCE States. We must lift that shadow and, as Foreign Minister Steinmeier said, rebuild trust, renew dialogue and restore security.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): We welcome His Excellency Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, and thank him for the very clear and comprehensive briefing delivered to the Security Council this morning in his role as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The priorities set for the German chairmanship — renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust and restoring security — address fundamental concerns of international life and our quest for peace and security.

Since its inception, the OSCE's work has been a relevant factor in that endeavour, and we commend its tangible contribution to international peace and security, its upholding of the purposes and principles of the United Nations and its cooperation under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. During the 40 years of its existence, the OSCE's agenda has been effectively aligned with the three pillars of the United Nations, that is, peace and security, human rights and development.

Angola needs a Europe in peace, marked by stability and growing economies. We therefore attach great relevance to the programme set by the German chairmanship of the OSCE, focused on the fight against threats such as terrorism, radicalism, drug trafficking, as well as on countering the abuse of cyberspace, by addressing youth radicalization through a comprehensive approach to security and the efforts that it has been deploying to address today's growing security challenges. Angola supports and appreciates the OSCE's outstanding role in that regard.

In addition, the organization's efforts to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in areas such as arms control are of relevance, as are initiatives aimed at managing cross-border movements and the social and political impact of migration, based on the organization's commitment to human rights and the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, which are solid foundations for lasting solutions to the critical problems affecting the international community. We welcome the German chairmanship's objective of holding a conference on those issues later this year in Berlin.

With regard to specific country situations, we praise the OSCE's active support to the current negotiations and mechanisms for solving conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh and to the Transnistria talks on Georgia, as well as its fundamental role in the stabilization of Kosovo and in monitoring the Minsk agreement on eastern Ukraine.

Angola values with great appreciation the contribution of regional and subregional organizations to the maintenance of international peace and security. They play a key role in strengthening the multilateral system and complement the work of the United Nations through the specific knowledge of their respective regions, particularly with regard to the root causes of conflict.

Finally, we would like to stress the importance of dialogue between the Security Council and the OSCE, as well as with other international, regional and subregional organizations, in prevention and crisis management and tackling issues that are threats to regional peace and stability in Europe.

Angola wishes the German chairmanship great success and thanks the Chairperson-in-Office for coming to New York.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): We appreciate the opportunity to hear directly from Minister Steinmeier on the priorities that Germany will pursue as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We welcome in particular the Chairperson's goal of strengthening OSCE capacities in all aspects of conflict, from early warning and prevention to ending conflict and restoring lasting peace. This aligns closely with the Council's mandate, including areas where it needs to improve, especially in terms of conflict prevention.

New Zealand is a strong advocate of the positive role of regional organizations in addressing conflict. Experience in our region has shown that regional organizations can be highly effective and support the United Nations efforts to prevent conflict and restore stability. It is therefore not surprising that on many occasions we have highlighted the need for enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

The OSCE is no exception. It has a long history of defusing conflict and promoting human rights and democratic principles, and it continues to demonstrate its relevance today in a number of conflict zones and across a wide array of security issues, all of which complement the Council's mandate of maintaining international peace and security. With respect to territorial disputes, the OSCE is carrying out important work to reduce tensions and engage parties in dialogue. We also welcome its programmes aimed at countering other threats to security, such as violent extremism, radicalization and human trafficking.

The OSCE's stature and reputation mean that it is often the best suited to tackle security challenges or support conflict resolution in its region. We applaud the OSCE's continuing and important role in maintaining security in many parts of Europe that have been and continue to be troubled by conflict, as outlined by Minister Steinmeier this morning. This is most obviously evident in Ukraine, where the parties have bestowed particular and difficult roles on the OSCE to monitor and verify compliance with the terms of the

Minsk agreements. The Minsk agreements remain the best path to a durable peace. This was recognized by the Council, which endorsed the package of measures for implementing the Minsk agreements and the OSCE's important role in monitoring them when it adopted resolution 2202 (2015) last February.

Yet on almost all counts, implementation by the parties is far from perfect. Lives continue to be lost, the humanitarian situation is poor and the availability of weapons presents the ongoing risk of a resumption of conflict. As we have heard today, the OSCE reports almost daily that its monitors are encountering freedom-of-movement restrictions, mostly in separatist-controlled areas. We commend the OSCE monitors for their work under challenging circumstances, and call on all parties to ensure their safety and security at all times. OSCE monitors must be allowed to access all areas necessary to verify a ceasefire and the withdrawal of proscribed weapons. We repeat our call on Russia to use its influence over the separatists to ensure that they comply with all aspects of the Minsk agreements.

The parties to the Minsk agreements decided that local elections in eastern Ukraine would be held in accordance with OSCE standards and monitored by the OSCE. These elections will need to take place in a safe and stable environment, which is another reason why security aspects of the Minsk agreements need to be implemented urgently.

As Foreign Minister Steinmeier noted, the United Nations and the OSCE share many common goals and responsibilities. As others have mentioned here today, we hope that the two organizations can strengthen their cooperation to mutually reinforce their efforts to maintain peace and security.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Today is the last day of February. China thanks Venezuela, in its capacity as Council president this month, for leading the Council to conduct its work efficiently and practically. I also wish Angola every success in its Council presidency in March.

I thank you, Sir, for convening today's open meeting. I welcome Foreign Minister Steinmeier of Germany to today's meeting in his capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I listened carefully to his briefing.

In recent years, the OSCE has made positive efforts in preventive diplomacy, enhancing security and mutual confidence, and mediating regional disputes. China commends the OSCE for its efforts and welcomes the priorities defined by the German chairmanship for enhancing dialogue, rebuilding mutual trust and restoring security. We hope that the OSCE shall continue to play its constructive role in maintaining regional peace, security and stability.

China consistently advocates for political solutions to regional hotspot issues through dialogue and negotiation, and supports regional and subregional organizations in conducting preventive diplomacy, defusing differences and settling conflicts by peaceful means so as to contribute to the promotion of regional peace and security. The activities of regional organizations should conform to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principle of respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries.

The Security Council and regional and subregional organizations have their respective advantages in maintaining international peace and security. The United Nations and the Security Council should, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, continue to deepen cooperation with regional and subregional organizations so as to be mutually complementary in their efforts to jointly uphold the Charter and the basic principles guiding international relations. The OSCE is an important partner of the United Nations. We support the Security Council's engagement in efficient and practical cooperation with the OSCE in maintaining regional peace and security.

The overall situation in eastern Ukraine is relatively calm. All relevant parties, including the OSCE, have made positive efforts in this process. A comprehensive settlement of the Ukraine issue must follow the general direction of a political solution, taking fully into account the legitimate rights, interests and demands of all regions and ethnic groups within Ukraine, while paying due attention to the legitimate concerns of all relevant parties. China supports all relevant parties in fully implementing the Minsk agreement, as called for in resolution 2202 (2015), and in continuously advancing a political solution to the Ukraine issue. The international community should enable the Normandy and Minsk mediation mechanisms to play their full roles and jointly advance the early achievement of peace, calm, stability and development in Ukraine.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased to welcome to the Security Council the Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in his capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We thank him for his substantive briefing.

We have consistently stood for developing and improving cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional mechanisms on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations, first and foremost Chapter VIII. It is on this very foundation that cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE should be based. Cooperation between the two organizations is regular and multilateral in nature, covering all dimensions of security, as well as cross-dimensional issues.

We share the emphasis of the German chairmanship on the "all-weather" dialogue, for which the OSCE has a solid foundation in the form of the genuine equality of all States parties and a broad-based agenda, which reflects the interests of all. As is well known, in the OSCE not a single State or bloc of States can freeze matters of common interest and of paramount importance for European security. There are collective means of crisis management, which enjoy high credibility in the region. That must remain the OSCE's philosophy of dialogue in the future.

The OSCE has entered into its fifth decade of existence, having accumulated considerable international experience and created its own mechanisms. Unfortunately, the ideals that were at the heart of the creation of the organization have not always been implemented in practice, nor has cooperation between States become a key rallying factor. Sometimes, one has the impression that geopolitical egoism or a narrowness of political thinking has the upper hand.

Who would have thought that in the heart of Europe there could have been such a violent armed coup d'état as took place in Ukraine, and even with the support of some members of the OSCE? In that context, the people of Crimea were free to decide to join Russia. The instruments that were proposed by the OSCE to settle the crisis, including the Swiss road map, remained on the table, first and foremost due to Kyiv's lack of desire to seek a solution based on an inclusive dialogue to solve the conflict with different regions and to a lack of good political leadership. The agenda was imposed by radicals. That is the reason not only for the complete disarray in the economic and political life of Ukraine, but also of Kyiv's failure to implement a number of key provisions of the package of measures agreed upon in Minsk by the leaders of Normandy quartet and endorsed in resolution 2202 (2015).

We believe that one of the primary tasks for the German chairmanship of the OSCE should be the full implementation of the package of measures. In that regard, it is quite convenient that Germany is also an active member of Normandy format, and indeed, thanks to its international prestige, Germany has given the package of measures more weight. Nevertheless, the OSCE has neither the political nor the moral right to lose sight of the investigation of the tragedy on the Maidan in February 2014 and in Odessa on 2 May 2014.

We called attention to the brash assertion of certain participants at the events in the Maidan, recently widely publicized in Ukraine, who openly acknowledged that they were the instigators of killings of law enforcement officers, who, unarmed, were ensuring public order in the capital of Ukraine in those days. No charges have been levied against them, nor are investigations under way. We cannot indulge in their impunity.

We think that the current format of cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE in Ukraine is sufficient. We base this on the fact that the parties themselves have the primary responsibility for implementing the practical solutions to stabilize the situation — demining, rehabilitation of infrastructure, exchange of prisoners and so on. It is important to recall the dangers of attempts to blur or reinterpret the existing mechanisms, such as the Contact Group or the Normandy format, and to launch new initiatives that only distract us from the necessity to fully implement the package of measures.

On the whole, we support the activities of the OSCE Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. We believe that monitors could pay more attention to monitoring on the territory under the control of the Ukrainian army — in particular the Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov and Zaporozhye regions, where armaments and equipment are being accumulated — and provide more complete reporting on their activities. However, despite those criticisms, the OSCE Monitoring Mission in Ukraine is the only mechanism that can work with all parties to the conflict: Kyiv and Donetsk and Luhansk.

It is of the utmost importance that the monitoring activities be carried out in a manner that is equal on both sides of the line of contact, and not concentrated mainly in the territories under the control of the militias. Due to such distortions, mistrust arises on the part of Luhansk and Donetsk, which in particular is then reflected in the problems of access by monitors to sites in the republics. We would like to note that Monitoring Mission staff regularly visit districts along the Ukrainian-Russian border, and nothing suspicious has been documented in their reports.

An important element in establishing a global unifying agenda is strengthening the OSCE as a format for dialogue and cooperation with regard to transnational threats and challenges. We support the efforts of the German chairmanship in that regard. It would be advisable to conduct a joint assessment of threats to common security. We hope that documents already adopted by the United Nations and the OSCE on the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking will provide more results. We note the contribution of Berlin to the preliminary agreement on 12 February in Vienna of the additional list of confidence-building measures in the use of information and computer technologies. We believe that the OSCE can contribute to the response to the migration crisis, which requires in-depth discussion.

On the military-political front, a common understanding of shared goals in arms control and confidence-building measures is needed. But for this one needs to overcome the logic of containment, a mode of thinking again prevailing among NATO strategists.

We recognize the relevance of including an item on sustainable connectivity on the agenda of economic and environmental baskets. Harmonizing and calibrating the integration processes in Europe and Eurasia are designed to reduce the potential for conflict on the continent. We think that the upcoming business conference in Berlin on economic connectivity on 18 and 19 May will allow progress on that path.

The humanitarian dimension of the OSCE should be depoliticized, cleansed of double standards. Russian priorities in that regard are well-known — the protection of universal traditional values; countering aggressive nationalism, radicalism and neo-Nazism; preventing attempts to falsify the history of the Second World War; the fight against ethnic and religious intolerance, including against Christians; and the protection of journalists working in conflict zones. Ensuring the rights of children and the disabled, non-intervention in private life and agreement on common rules for monitoring elections are among other topics that the OSCE should pay more attention to. The whole spectrum of social, economic and cultural rights require equal attention.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to welcome the convening of this Security Council meeting devoted to the briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is the product of the vision and the commitment of 57 countries from Europe, North America and Asia for peace through cooperation. On this important occasion, my delegation also welcomes the presence among us of Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany in his capacity as the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. I thank him for his briefing.

As a follow-up to the open debate (see S/PV.7621) on respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as a key element for the maintenance of peace, we are meeting this morning to discuss an organization whose vision and actions are inspired by those principles. As a witness to two world wars in the space of a generation, Europe has put in place an instrument for regional cooperation in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The ups and downs that have marked the existence of the OSCE since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act and the subsequent Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe attest to the urgent nature of the OSCE's mission with regard to the scope of the challenges still to be met. That is why I would like to welcome the strategic option of structuring the OSCE's action around the political, military, economic and environmental dimensions, as well as the human and security dimensions.

The German chairmanship of the OSCE comes at a time when Europe is experiencing one of its most turbulent periods since the end of the Cold War. From Georgia to Nagorno Karabakh to Donetsk in Ukraine — in all of those regions the OSCE is facing daunting challenges, in addition to transnational threats such as terrorism, arms control challenges, crime, cybercrime, migration and trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings. That is why I welcome the approach that Mr. Steinmeier intends to use in his chairmanship — that of renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust and restoring security. For its part, Senegal, as a firm believer in the peaceful settlement of conflicts in Africa and the rest of the world, can only welcome the choice of Germany, which squares perfectly with the ideals of the United Nations.

In that regard, I would like to highlight and welcome the OSCE Permanent Council's decision to extend the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine until 31 March 2017, and that of the Observer Mission deployed at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints until 30 April of this year. We should remember that those two Missions, together with the OSCE Project Coordinator and the Trilateral Contact Group in Ukraine, make up the institutional mechanisms established to encourage a diplomatic solution to the Ukrainian crisis. In that regard, we should support the efforts that have already been launched to reduce tensions and promote peace, stability and security, as well as to facilitate among between the authorities, civil society and ethnic and religious groups. Combined with strengthened technical and operational capabilities, the extension should help to stabilize the ceasefire, the arms withdrawal and the building of a national dialogue, in accordance with the Minsk agreements and with respect for the Normandy format.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict should also remain at the centre of the efforts of the OSCE, which should continue to work to convene a conference capable of serving as the basis for a peaceful negotiated settlement of the crisis, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. If that is to be achieved, it is important to intensify efforts aimed at concluding an agreement on a cessation of hostilities and setting up a peace process under the auspices of the Minsk Group with respect for the States' territorial integrity and the sovereignty.

I would also like to highlight the importance of continuing the efforts to resolve the conflicts in Transnistria under the 5+2 negotiations format, and in Georgia through the international discussions in Geneva. While it is clear that those tasks remain complex and highly challenging, if they are to succeed the OSCE will have to work to strengthen confidence-building measures among the various parties. Hence the importance of a dynamic partnership with the United Nations, whose cooperation in that regard will continue to be valuable. Overall, however, we feel reassured by the commitment of the Chairperson-in-Office to the Helsinki+40 Process, to the Review Conference on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe scheduled for this autumn and to combating common threats such as terrorism.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Senegal's full support for the ideal on which the Helsinki Final Act was founded, establishing on the basis of shared principles and objectives a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian community from Vancouver to Vladivostok that is free, democratic, united and indivisible.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): We warmly welcome Mr. Steinmeier and would like to thank him for his tireless efforts on Ukraine, which have been demonstrated once again in his briefing to the Security Council today. I would like to express Ukraine's support for the priorities for 2016 of Germany's Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We particularly commend Germany's determination to focus its efforts on practical responses to the grave threats to security in the OSCE's area of operations. The Russian aggression against Ukraine in Crimea and the Donbas region remains at the top of that list. Due to necessity rather than any choice of ours, the issue of that aggression will continue to be at the centre of the OSCE's attention. Germany's participation in the Normandy format negotiations will be very helpful to the OSCE efforts in that regard.

Ukraine fully shares and supports the German chairmanship's motto — "Renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust, restoring security". It is a very accurate description of what is needed for the situation not just within the OSCE's purview but all over the world. Instead of dialogue, we frequently witness bitter exchanges of mutual accusations. These days, instead of a climate of trust, an overriding sense of mutual suspicion sets the tone in international politics. Instead of having a sense of secrity and confidence, States increasingly feel threatened in the current environment of systematic violations of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and of a lack of international instruments adequate to holding the perpetrators of such violations to account. Under the circumstances of these difficult times, Germany's commitment to leading the OSCE is highly commendable. The German chairmanship has set itself an ambitious and noble task. It is a high bar, and I would like to assure Mr. Steinmeier of our full support for his efforts.

The Security Council is vested with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Still, one can hardly avoid noticing that the dominant trend is worsening. The growing potential for conflict across the globe is shaping our new security reality, and one permanent member of the Security Council has repeatedly resorted over the past decade to the most problematic area of that reality — armed aggression against neighbouring States in Europe that has resulted in occupation and, even more alarmingly, in the attempted annexation of part of the territory of another country, the first such attempt since the Second World War.

We have all been dealing with the Russian hybrid war against Ukraine, which is marked by the invention of artificial grounds for invasion, the deployment of regular troops without insignia and the use of pervasive, virulent propaganda. That has led to the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the plunging of the Donbas region into a bloody conflict. Ukraine, like other European States, also has to counter regular attempts to destabilize its internal situation. The overall style of such subversive activities is recognizable through its use of similar tools such as marginal nationalist forces operating under pseudo-patriotic slogans, including, in the countries of the European Union, those voicing anti-immigrant sentiments.

I have to express our deep concern about the fact that the situation in Donbas remains fragile and prone to escalation, despite the significant efforts of Ukraine and the international community, including Mr. Steinmeier's personal contribution as a member of the Normandy ministerial framework. Ukraine's efforts to implement the Minsk agreements have not been reciprocated in Russia. Moscow still relies on the pseudo-republics it has manufactured as a tool that may be activated at any time the Kremlin considers expedient, including by triggering new phases of conflict.

For Ukraine, the Minsk agreements remain the agreed basis for a peaceful resolution to the situation in Donbas. Since the initial documents were signed, in September 2014, we have regularly initiated steps aimed at silencing the weapons there. It is profoundly regrettable that, a year after the Minsk package of measures was agreed on, its initial security provisions have yet to be implemented by Russia and its proxies. We are ready to fully implement the agreements and move forward with all aspects, including holding local elections in various areas of Donbas, which must be conducted in accordance with Ukrainian legislation and OSCE standards in order to produce legitimate regional representatives. Our constitutional reform and decentralization will encompass the elected representatives and provide them with powers, responsibility and accountability. What we need in order to move forward is a solid security foundation, and in particular a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire, the verified withdrawal of heavy weapons and unfettered monitoring by the OSCE throughout the conflict area, including at the border with Russia.

As progress on the security track is long overdue, we need to take decisive steps to establish the security conditions necessary for a peaceful settlement in Donbas. What is required is a genuine disengagement line rather than a contact line, with weapons effectively withdrawn, armed provocations by militants rendered impossible and an enhanced international presence capable of ensuring security on the ground, in addition to the monitoring and verification functions that the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission currently performs. We welcome the recent extension of the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission to Urkaine upon Ukraine's request. While our invitation to deploy a United Nations international peacekeeping operation remains on the table, enhancing the OSCE capacities on the ground and reinforcing them with a special police mission under the auspices of the OSCE could become an effective tool in bringing peace to Donbas.

It is evident that the uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian border makes the impact of all international efforts on de-escalation very limited, as replenishments to the illegal armed groups with weapons and manpower from Russia continue. As an agreed initial step until Ukrainian border guards resume control at the border, permanent monitoring and verification by the OSCE along all border sections of concern from both sides of the border should be ensured, as stipulated by the Minsk protocol of September 2014, also signed by Russia.

The release of all hostages and illegally detained persons, including Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia, will be a crucial benchmark for assessing Russia's readiness to embark on the de-escalation path. It is one of the few provisions of the Minsk agreement that contains a very specific timeframe, for apparent humanitarian reasons, that is, within five days of the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the contact line.

About two years ago Russia launched its aggression against Ukraine in Crimea, trampling fundamental international norms and principles, including those enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act. The united international response to Russia's illegal actions was delivered here in New York on 27 March 2014, when the General Assembly adopted its resolution 68/262, entitled "Territorial integrity of Ukraine".

Echoed by other organizations and States across the globe, the strong international condemnation proves that the issue of the illegally occupied peninsula is firmly on the agenda, whatever Russia claims. I am absolutely convinced that an international framework to address the Crimean case will be established sooner or later, as that is the only way to guarantee the full relevance of international law. Restoring respect for the fundamental norms and principles of our peaceful coexistence and cooperation and seeking their proper implementation are in the interests of both the United Nations and the OSCE.

Finally, allow me to express our deepest appreciation to all colleagues around the table who spoke strongly today in favour of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country. That is an exremely powerful message for those back home who stand fighting for it.

Mr. Gasso Matoses (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation expresses its appreciation for the presence of Minister Steinmeier in his capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to provide us with Germany's priorities during its chairmanship. We trust in the German leadership, given the country's political weight, its knowledge of the organization and its commitment to the search for solutions to conflicts. Spain extends its full cooperation and support to the German chairmanship.

Renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust and restoring security is not only a motto of the Germany chairmanship, it is also an objective that we share and support. We have analysed the chairmanship's priorities and we are satisfied to note that they correspond to a great extent with Spain's priorities within the organization.

The OSCE is the only regional organization that brings together 57 countries of the Euro-Atlantic, Euro-Asiatic and Euro-Mediterranean regions in a single forum and with the same principles and commitments, including respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of States, as has been reiterated here today. Its multidimensional security focus from the political, military, economic, environmental and humanitarian perspectives, as well as its concept of cooperative security, set forth in the December 2010 Astana Commemorative Declaration, among others, makes the OSCE an essential platform for strengthening the security of all of its member States and States of the region. None of the challenges that we face today, ranging from terrorism, the proliferation of weapons, cybercrime and climate change, can be addressed solely with exclusive tools or perspectives of a military or security nature.

Allow me to refer to one of the main challenges of the OSCE, which has been mentioned repeatedly in the Chamber today. I refer to the crisis in and around Ukraine.

Almost a year ago, in its resolution 2202 (2015), the Security Council adopted the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Unfortunately, one year later we continue to have to call for the implementation of those agreements. While we recognize the efforts made by the Government of Ukraine, we call on all the parties to the conflict and all those that have the capacity to assist to make firm progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In particular, putting an end to the ceasefire violations is essential. The adoption of measures to mitigate the humanitarian impact of the conflict is also necessary. Spain recognizes and fully supports the role of the OSCE in the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine and through the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. We are aware of the limitations of the Mission and the challenges before it. Nonetheless, it is the best guarantee for an international presence in eastern Ukraine, and in that way to help put an end to the conflict. It is necessary that all the parties involved help the Mission in carrying out its mandate in all its areas of operation and that the Mission's full freedom of movement is guranteed and respected. We also recognize the valuable work of the Normandy format and Germany in efforts to resolve this crisis. We trust that the next meeting of the format, scheduled for Thursday, 3 March, will make it possible to continue to make progress of the various elements of the Minsk agreements.

Allow me to move on to another region whose stability is closely linked to the future and the presence of the OSCE. I refer to the Meditarranean. Germany played a key role last year to promote cooperation in the southern coastal area of Europe and to revitalize the Mediterranean Contact Group, which it chaired. We sincerely appreciate Minister Steinmeir's personal involvement in that work and his solid participation at the OSCE Mediterranean conference in Jordan in October 2015. Spain believes it is essential to invigorate and solidify cooperation with the Mediterranean cooperation partners, including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Israel, and to strengthen the Group. In that regard, we continue to work with the current Austrian chairmanship of the Group, with which we are organizing an event in Madrid to be held in May.

Closely linked to this area, to which the Minister referred, the OSCE, in its comprehensive view of security, is a suitable framework to address the complicated phenomenon of the migration and refugee crisis, and it can provide important added value. We support the continued efforts begun last year in Belgade in the lead-up to the next ministerial council to be held in Hamburg. We also hope that the next meeting on security, which will be held in Rome on 4 March, will also provide it with significant momentum. We place Spain's experience on comprehensive management of the migration phenomenon at the disposal of the chairmanship-in-office.

As Minsiter Steinmeier noted, the 2011 Vienna document on confidence-building and security measures will be reissued this year. It is undoubtedly an excellent opportunity to do that and align it on the basis of a constantly evolving security situation. We recognize the work that Germany is carrying out in that regard. This year the Council will also be undertaking the comprehensive review of resolution 1540 (2006), the Committee of which Spain is the Chair. The OSCE is probably the regional organization with the most experience in the implementation of the resolution. Therefore, we hope that we will be able to make a substantive contribution to the comprehensive review and, to that end, we make ourselves available to the chairmanship. The Chair of the Committee will visit the OSCE next April.

Finally, I wish to refer to one of the fundamental dimensions of the OSCE, its human dimension, as we are convinced that security is not possible if human rights and fundamental freedoms are not respected by law. We support the German chairmanship in its effort to continue strengthening this third dimension of the OSCE, and we agree on the central role of the implementation of the obligations and commitments related to fundamental freedoms. In particular, we would like to acknowledge and welcome the references made by the Foreign Minister today on the issue of women and peace and security and the importance of the participation of women. Accordingly, we will continue to work in the framework of the OSCE to effectively satisfy the provisions of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2242 (2015).

Today's meeting shows that the enhancement of cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations is possible. Spain will contribute to that end through its membership in both entities. We do not consider it to be only a formal matter, but necessary in the effort to come up with synergies and work practices that create true added value.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I would like to begin by thanking by thanking the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Foreign Minister Steinmeier, for his briefing and for being here with us today. We know that the partnership between the OSCE and the United Nations remains strong and we welcome the opportunity to hear about Germany's priorities in 2016 to advance the OSCE's efforts in support of peace and security.

At the Astana summit just over five years ago, all 57 OSCE members recommitted to the principles and values enshrined in the OSCE common documents, including that all OSCE norms, principles and commitments apply equally and without exception to each participating State and that we are accountable to our citizens and responsible to each other for their full implementation. Today, the principles and commitments embodied by the OSCE face some serious challenges, both from inside and outside the organization. From within, there is an uneven application of the Helsinki norms, principles and commitments, where some States are re-exerting a sphere of influence at the expense of other States, while, from without, regional crises and transnational threats are proliferating.

Efforts to resolve the conflict in Ukraine and the protracted conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and Nagorno Karabakh continue to face very frustrating obstacles. We commend the Chairperson-in-Office's efforts in support of resolving the crisis in Ukraine, including his leadership in obtaining an extension of the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine through 31 March 2017. The roles of both the OSCE Monitoring Mission and the Trilateral Contact Group are essential to restoring peace to Ukraine, and the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, including the ceasefire and weapons pullback, is critical. The Monitoring Mission and also plays a critical role in assessing the humanitarian situation on the ground and facilitating the delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid.

The increase in violence along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine is of enormous concern — the worst since the ceasefire declaration of 1 September 2015. OSCE monitoring reports indicate that the number of ceasefire violations continues to rise — on just one day, 24 February, monitors registered nearly 850 explosions and firing of small and heavy weapons. The OSCE has also documented the movement of heavy weapons out of designated storage sites and placed in areas off-limits under the Minsk agreements.

When the Special Monitoring Mission was established, in March 2014, all 57 OSCE participating States agreed that "Mission members will have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine". Yet, more than a year after the signing of the Minsk memorandum and protocol and the Minsk implementation package, Russian-backed separatists do not allow OSCE observers full access to all areas to monitor and verify the maintenance of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the presence of foreign fighters. Russian-backed separatist forces have repeatedly barred the Monitoring Mission from inspecting heavy weapons storage sites. Furthermore, the separatist routinely denied the Mission access to the Ukrainian-Russian border, while Russia unilaterally blocks the expansion of the OSCE border observation mission beyond the two current small checkpoints.

According to OSCE reports, movement restrictions on the Special Monitoring Mission often go hand-in-hand with weapons violations and have overwhelmingly occurred on the separatist side of the line of contact. In addition, the separatists continue to make direct threats against the Mission itself. On 15 February, near Kominternove, they once again threatened to shoot Mission members, which is the third such incident since January. The United States reiterates its call on Russia to direct the separatists it supports and supplies to immediately honour the ceasefire, withdraw heavy weapons visibly and verifiably, return those weapons to their designated storage sites and end restrictions on the movements and activities of the Monitoring Mission.

The United States strongly supports the OSCE's efforts to support a peaceful resolution of long-standing conflicts, such as its mission to broker a comprehensive settlement to the Transnistria conflict by facilitating direct dialogue between the sides and by supporting confidence-building measures. But in Transnistria, like in Donbas, local so-called authorities refuse to grant OSCE monitors unfettered access to do their important work. The United States calls for unrestricted access for the OSCE Mission to Moldova throughout the country, including the Transnistrian region, so that it can perform its activities and fulfil its mandate.

The OSCE continues its dedicated support of a negotiated settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Regrettably, violence along the line of contact and the Armenia-Azerbaijan State border has escalated over the past several months. The United States condemns the use of mortars and other heavy weaponry, which have caused civilian casualties, and appeals to the sides to take immediate steps to reduce tensions and protect lives. The status quo is neither acceptable nor sustainable. We remind the sides that there can be no military solution to this conflict. As a Chair of the OSCE Minsk group, the United States will continue to work closely with the sides to achieve a lasting, negotiated settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict based on the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act.

The United States fully supports Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We urge the Russian Government to withdraw its troops to pre-war positions and allow humanitarian agencies and the European Union Monitoring Mission unfettered access in the occupied territories there. As a participant in the Geneva international discussions along with the OSCE and the United Nations, the United States remains committed to working with the parties and the other Chairs to improve the security and humanitarian situation for all residents of Georgia affected by the conflict.

There is an immediate need for coordinated response to the migration and refugee crisis in the OSCE region and beyond. Addressing the impact of the large numbers of migrants arriving in Europe requires rights-based responses to the challenges of migration, including by prioritizing respect for the human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and by developing the capacity of Governments to integrate new arrivals and counter anti-migrant sentiment, xenophobia and hate crimes. The OSCE continues to play a vital role in that regard, and the OSCE's role in support of the global effort to address weapons proliferation, including through implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), is critical. We strongly support the commitment of the OSCE to strengthen member States' commitments to implementing the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) in order to increase the role of women in peacemaking and peacebuilding and to end violence against women in conflict.

The fundamental commitments of the OSCE have provided clarity, stability and continuity to participating States for more than 35 years in our common effort to promote comprehensive security throughout the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. We must all continue to implement our mutual commitments. We value the deepening cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE to that end.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela appreciates the briefing and the presence of the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany. We also wish to extend our sincere congratulations to Germany on assuming the chairmanship of the organization.

Venezuela supports the work of regional organizations in promoting negotiated conflict resolution under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations as an element of support for the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and where direct dialogue between the parties is a key element. In that context, our country supports the work being done by the OSCE in line with the Helsinki agreements, which provide it with important tools to respond to international challenges and to promote peace and stability in the region.

The OSCE has played an important role in strengthening relations among its member countries through dialogue, and, despite their differences, important consensuses have been successfully achieved in different situations that required it. The role of the chairmanship of the OSCE has become increasingly relevant to promoting dialogue and harmony among its members.

In the context of certain specific issues related to Ukraine, we wish to stress the need for the full implementation of resolution 2202 (2015), in support of the decision reached by the heads of State of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany on 12 February 2015 in Minsk. We must continue efforts to find a political and diplomatic solution to the humanitarian crisis under which the parties are committed to working to achieve a firm and lasting peace. That is why a definitive cessation of hostilities must not be delayed, and we hope that this will come to pass.

As the chairmanship has already indicated, the complex situation in the Middle East has an impact on security and stability in the European region. Thus the destabilization of Libya, Syria and Iraq and the rapidly expanding terrorist phenomenon is an element that, along with other pending issues such as the settlement of the question of Palestine, makes it necessary to call on the European community to take action to prevent such conflicts and address the emergence of such phenomena. The destabilization of the Middle East and the Mediterranean has led to a difficult humanitarian situation and a desperate outflow of refugees towards the European region. In this respect, the OSCE can play a key role in supporting the countries most affected, based on a vision of identifying and addressing the root causes of the conflicts that lead to the displacement of peoples.

The promotion of security and stability and respect for human rights through the full implementation of international norms in this area are vital to fighting the discrimination, racism, intolerance and xenophobia that have been expressed in the form of attacks against the humanitarian assistance required for the wave of refugees, who come from both from the Middle East and North Africa.

We must continue to work towards the prevention of conflicts as a complement to the work of the OSCE, through a multidimensional approach aimed at addressing current challenges in this complex and multifaceted situation.

Finally, communication and coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE must be strengthened and intensified so as to promote international peace and security.

We wish the greatest success to Minister Steinmeier in his chairmanship of the OSCE so that he can carry out balanced and inclusive work, taking into account the views of all members of the OSCE, so as to achieve the objectives set within the framework of the priorities of this regional organization and thereby promote international peace and security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to make a few brief comments.

First, I was surprised to note that, in the context of the principal issues, I agree with the statement made by the representative of the United States. First, he quite rightly noted that one of the most important principles of the OSCE is the equality of all members before international law. We fully agree with that and deem it unacceptable that there have been statements made on the right of certain States to determine the fate of the rest of the world.

Another issue that was rightly noted by the United States representative and with which we agree is the danger posed by a return to the principle of spheres of influence. We are critical of the expansion of NATO into the east and of how the European Union continues to formulate its policy of Eastern partnership. Eastern European States are given the choice to be either with the West or with the East.

As the Council will recall, the crisis in Ukraine broke out as a result of the fact that Brussels began to categorically demand that president Yanukovych immediately sign the agreement on association with the European Union. Therefore a return to the policy of the spheres of influence is extremely undermining in terms of consequences for European security.

Yet another element on which I fully agree with the representative of the United States is the continuing dangerous situation in terms of security between the Kyiv armed forces and rebel battalions that are continuing to operate in eastern Ukraine and Donetsk and Luhansk. What the representative of the United States did not say, however, and what needs to be said is that to a large extent this exacerbation is due to the fact that the Ukrainian armed forces took over a neutral space and began to defend a security zone there with heavy weaponry. This runs totally counter to the logic and the letter of the Minsk agreements, which speak of the need for the withdrawal of forces. The Ukrainian forces are coming dangerously close to the armed groups, which has led to exchanges of fire and attacks.

In this regard, I cannot but express my disappointment at the statement made by my Ukrainian colleague, who repeated several propagandistic slogans with respect to Russia. I am wondering, when is Kyiv going to implement the clearly defined elements of the package? Why was a law not adopted last year on the special status of Donbas? When will it be adopted? When will the amnesty law be adopted? When will there finally be an agreement with the Kyiv authorities and the Luhansk and Donetsk leadership?

Upon the request of Kyiv and the leadership of Russia in the Normandy format, we convinced representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk to postpone the local elections that were supposed to take place at the end of last year, but prospects for agreement on how the elections will be held look rather dim. Indeed, there are difficulties in the context of the Contact Group, so it seems that Kyiv once again is really drawing out the process.

In this regard, I should like once again to reiterate the request that our colleagues in the Normandy format have heard. We need to be very demanding and act as a matter of principle. When agreements are reached at a high level, Kyiv must be required to implement them. I think that when that happens, other issues — which, as we heard, Mr. Steinmeier stressed during his recent meeting with Minister Klimkin— the fight against corruption and economic reforms will move forward, because in a conflict situation it is probably too optimistic to expect some sort of progress on such fronts.

So Kyiv first and foremost should want to see the implementation of the package of measures, just as Russia does. It is time to put an end to the crisis, which would not have begun in the first place had it not been for this undermining policy of spheres of influence, which the United States criticized today.

Finally, quite frankly I did not want to digress from the issue of Ukraine, but the representative of the United States spoke about Georgia and criticized Russia and what is required of us. I should like to recall that the irreversible political changes that took place in the Caucasus in 2008 happened as a result of the aggression that Georgian politicians carried out against southern Ossetia. The United States supported them; at that time there were more than 100 United States military advisers in Georgia, so it would be naïve to think that they turned a blind eye to what was happening or missed it. So let us not engage in propaganda but concentrate on the ongoing work in the Caucasus and in Ukraine so as to normalize the situation after those crises, which were due to various factors, among which the United States played a rather significant role.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I am pleased that the representative of the Russian Federation can agree with so much of what I had to say. It is too bad, however, that we cannot agree to some basic facts in this Chamber. The facts remain that Russia backed the separatists, Russia armed the separatists and Russia led a military campaign that led to the purported annexation of Crimea, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Those are the facts and, sadly for the people victimized by this crisis and these conflicts, these facts remain unchanged, regardless of whatever distractions are offered in the Chamber today.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I will not make a long statement again, because I said what I said.

It is probably very easy for my Russian colleague to pick a few parts of my statement and react to them. Consequently, my question is: Why does he not react to everything I said? Why does he not react to the figures, to my call for the release of the political prisoners who are being held in Russia? It is a fact, which has been proven by many, that Russia has fulfilled none of its obligations under the Minsk agreements. Let us talk about everything in the Minsk agreements, not only about the constitutional amendments and the elections. They are not the topic of this meeting, after all, so I will not go into detail.

Finally, during two years of aggression, a 40,000-strong army has been built up in the Donbas. That army is financed, equipped and maintained by Russia and commanded by Russian officers. It has been supplied with sophisticated modern Russian weaponry. I have a very long list of weapons that are not and were never produced in Ukraine. Those weapons did not just fall from the sky. And the list goes on and on. Therefore, let us be more precise when we react to facts or allegations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am very ready to go into detail. I do not think that we need to take Mr. Steinmeier's time, as he is already aware of this whole situation.

From the very beginning, we have said that the crisis in Ukraine had to be resolved politically. At the Geneva talks on 17 April 2014, which involved the participation of the Secretary of State of the United States, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, we agreed on a declaration in which we stated that there was a need for inclusive political dialogue. Indeed, the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe also spoke about that in the road map. What was Ukraine's response? President Poroshenko put forth a peace initiative that provided a week for the capitulation of the citizens of Donbas. We immediately responded that there could be no military settlement; there must be a political one. The Ukrainians did not want a political settlement; they wanted a military one, so they get what they get.

Life is real and it is what is. My Ukrainian colleague understands that well. If he wants to go into the whole package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, we can do that, but we have already said these things many times and when everything that is supposed to happen has already been clearly established. Border control is supposed to happen last. It is all very clear in the package. A special status must be established and other things must be done, which Kyiv simply does not want to do.

Unfortunately, some States that have a strong influence on Kyiv — not in the Normandy format, but delegations around the table today — say "What do you want? Ukraine just cannot do it. We know it is written there, but Ukraine cannot do it." So, the representative of Ukraine cannot raise that question. If he is really talking about a political settlement, there is a need to demand and ensure that Ukraine adopt the laws that were supposed to be adopted under the package. Russia cannot do it for Ukraine.

Rhetorically, the representative of Ukraine can say whatever he wants, but unfortunately the situation in Ukraine will only deteriorate in that context and nobody will win.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Steinmeier to respond to the comments made.

Mr. Steinmeier: I do not want to repeat myself and my statement from the beginning. I will avoid responding to representatives' comments. I only want to thank you, Mr. President, for your kind invitation and the members for all their comments. We are really grateful for members' support regarding our priorities for the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2016 and for their readiness for cooperation, which they have offered in this Chamber.

Members must ensure that we remain engaged in using the tools of the OSCE in order to improve the security situation on the European continent, especially as we progress on the way to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. As our friend the Ambassador of France announced, we will be meeting in Paris on Thursday. I hope that we will achieve some progress, especially on the security situation and on our discussion on the election.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7636

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7636th meeting

Monday, 29 February 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ramírez Carreño	(Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of))
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Li Yongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January 1994 and 31 December 1994

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16-05410 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January 1994 and 31 December 1994

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/195, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Uruguay.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin by thanking and commending Judge Hassan Jallow of the brotherly country of the Gambia for the important role he has played in his capacity as Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

I congratulate Mr. Serge Brammertz, the current Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, on his appointment as Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, and I wish him the greatest of success.

In that regard, the delegation of Egypt will abstain in the voting on the draft resolution before the Council as a reflection of the consensus reached among the three African States members of the Security Council. We do not object to the person of Mr. Brammertz. Rather, our decision is based on the following two reasons.

First, it is unsatisfactory and unacceptable to set aside the former Prosecutor of the Residual Mechanism, Mr. Jallow, who was not nominated by the Secretary-General to retain his position. Our objection is based on the fact that Mr. Jallow is the only Tribunal official from a country that is not a member of the Group of Western European and other States, which represents a failure to observe the principle of equitable geographical distribution set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the statute of the Residual Mechanism.

Secondly, the arguments offered by the Secretariat for not nominating Mr. Jallow are inconsistent. They include the desire of the Secretariat to ensure the effectiveness of the Residual Mechanism by appointing Mr. Brammertz to continue work on the cases currently before him as Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Indeed, according to information in the possession of the African Group, Mr. Brammertz has not yet begun his work as Prosecutor of the ICTY on the cases to be submitted to the Residual Mechanism. Mr. Jallow and his colleagues have the expertise necessary to pursue the mission they have successfully carried out since 2012, including on the cases to be submitted to them as members of the Mechanism.

Similarly, we cannot accept Mr. Brammertz's appointment as a function of cost-cutting because he would be covering both roles. Indeed, this is in no way a convincing argument. The criteria in this case are based on clear principles that should be respected in this regard. The principle of double-hatting applied by the Secretariat to Mr. Jallow was not applied when the Secretary-General reappointed the American President of the Residual Mechanism. This raises questions concerning the apparent application of a double standard in this case.

The second reason for our abstention today is our reservation concerning the Secretariat's behaviour in this instance, in particular its unjustified delay in submitting the nomination of the Prosecutor until late February, which raises a number of questions. We fully support the contents of the latter sent by members of the Group of African States to the President of the Security Council on this issue.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Senegal thanks the delegation of Uruguay, which submitted the draft resolution before the Council. I make the following remarks in my national capacity.

The delegation of Senegal notes with concern the latter of 23 February 2016, in which the Secretary-

General proposes that Mr. Serge Brammertz of Belgium be appointed Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, replacing Mr. Hassan Bubacar Jallow of the Gambia, who had been Prosecutor of the Mechanism since 2012. Bearing in mind also the Secretary-General's intention to reappoint Judge Theodor Meron as President of the Residual Mechanism and Mr. John Hocking of Australia, who has been Registrar of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) since 15 May 2009 and of the Mechanism since January 2012, Senegal asked for a briefing by the Secretariat as to the reasons for the failure to reappoint Mr. Jallow as Prosecutor, representing the de facto exclusion of Africa from the leadership of the Mechanism. It is particularly regrettable to note that this exclusion contravenes the principle of the equitable geographical distribution enshrined in article 10 of the statute of the Mechanism, which provides that the Council shall take due account of the "adequate representation of the principal legal systems of the world" in its appointments.

The argument on behalf of continuity, raised during the course of the briefing, was fare from relevant, given the fact that Mr. Brammertz had not initiated most of the ongoing cases before the ICTY. Indeed, other Prosecutors before him had been replaced in the course of proceedings. On the contrary, the need to ensure the continuity and stability of the management of the Mechanism would speak in favour of the reappointment of Prosecutor Jallow, who led the Tribunal competently, responsibly, rigourously and effectively for four years, as was acknowledged by the Secretariat at the briefing. Moreover, aware that there was nothing in the foregoing arguments to prevent his reappointment to his functions, Prosecutor Jallow had already established teams to work on the cases to be submitted in appeal to the ICTY. In establishing these teams, he relied principally on staff of both the ICTY and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) to manage the appeals, as they had done in previous cases. It is also important to note that the ICTR still has before it the case of three fugitives who will be tried by the Mechanism once they have been arrested. The Mechanism has already begun preparations for the trial of those fugitives.

More critically, the appointment of Mr. Brammertz as Prosecutor of the Mechanism cannot be justified on the basis of the cost savings mentioned, because the President of the Mechanism is in the same situation as Prosecutor Jallow, and it is of the highest importance that the same principle be applied to both of them in order to avoid a double standard.

Africa has always been at the forefront of the fight against impunity, in particular with regard to the establishment of the ICTY and the ICTR. As such, given the recognition of Mr. Jallow's attributes — his high moral character, impartiality and integrity, as well as the need for Africa to be represented in the Mechanism — Senegal decided to abstain in the voting on the draft resolution. However, we would like to stress that our support for the Mechanism remains unwavering. Moreover, I would like to note that this matter was the subject of a letter addressed by the Chair of the Group of African States to the President of the Security Council.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): At the outset, we would like to say that we endorse the statements made by the representatives of Egypt and Senegal, and that we will uphold African solidarity in this matter. Angola will therefore abstain in the voting on the draft resolution on the appointment of the Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, for the following reasons.

We acknowledge that Prosecutor Serge Brammertz is a professional with the highest level of competence and experience in the conduct of investigations and the prosecution of criminal cases. However, we also acknowledge that Prosecutor Hassan Jallow is an eminent jurist with the highest level of competence and experience. He has performed remarkably as Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals and should be subject to the same treatment as that of his colleagues President Judge Theodor Meron and Registrar John Hocking, whose terms were renewed.

We noted with concern that the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals will be exclusively led by principals from Western Europe and other countries. We believe that the critical principle of equitable geographical representation was not taken into account, since the term of the only African principal of the Mechanism was not renewed. Furthermore, the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals is an institution for both the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) with two branches, one in Africa and the other in Europe. The fact that there are no more fugitives under the ICTR jurisdiction and that the Tribunal was closed should not prevent the appointment of a principal from the ICTR. Taking into consideration that the essence of the Residual Mechanism is to bring together the experience of both international tribunals, the Mechanism should have a more balanced composition and not be restricted to the principals from the ICTY.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

China, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Abstaining:

Angola, Egypt, Russian Federation, Senegal

The President: There were 11 votes in favour, none against and 4 abstentions . The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2269 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation abstained in the voting on resolution 2269 (2016). While we did not block the proposal of the Secretary-General with regard to the appointments to the post of President and Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, our delegation does not support that proposal and would like to express its very serious concerns about the chosen candidates.

As we see it, given the positions occupied by the proposed candidates in recent years in the International Criminal Tribunal on Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), these appointments could lead to the reproduction and continuation in the Mechanism of the significant flaws that were characteristic of the ICTY. As is well known, we have had many issues with the ICTY in its over 20 years of existence. One of the most important reasons for concern is the issue of the administration of justice, which has become a daily issue for the ICTY. The length of proceedings in certain trials was extended on various pretexts, often going beyond what could be considered reasonable. An example is the case of Vojislav Šešelj, who spent more than 10 years in detention awaiting his sentence. It is incomprehensible how such galling excess can go hand in hand with the presumption of innocence or the basic guarantees of the rights of respondents, which the ICTY has always proclaimed.

The attempts of the Security Council to influence the situation have not been successful. In particular, the Council has called on the Tribunal more than once to reduce the length of time for the completion of cases. The Tribunal, however, has managed to avoid following the instructions of the Security Council, and has shown impressive creativity in finding pretexts to justify the delays. The conclusion strategy for its work within the framework, established by the Council at the proposal of the ICTY itself, was constantly sabotaged. One example is resolution 1966 (2010), according to which the closing of the ICTY should have occurred by 31 December 2014. The Tribunal did not meet that deadline either. Furthermore, the delays in administering justice were not reduced in spite of the appeal contained in resolution 2193 (2014); the delays in fact increased. We hope that the new President of the ICTY, Judge Carmel Agius, will take the necessary steps to improve the current situation.

We are very concerned by reports of the death in February of Zdravko Tolimir in a prison in The Hague. According to his defence lawyers, in 2015 he applied to travel to Serbia for medical care; however, his request was refused. This is not the first such death. For obvious reasons, such events cause serious concerns about due process for respondents and those convicted by the ICTY, and with regard to such fundamental rights as the right to life and the right to health. Measures to improve this situation are necessary. It is important that the Office of Internal Oversight Services investigate the work of the ICTY medical unit. We expect corresponding proposals or instructions from the Secretary-General.

It is important to separate the failures of the ICTY from the work of its leadership. We would certainly not like to see the Mechanism inherit the problems of the ICTY, which unfortunately has not proven itself to be an impartial body of international justice. Based on everything I have just said, we abstained in the voting on today's resolution because we would not like to bear responsibility for the consequences of the proposed appointments.

Mr. Li Yongsheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): With regard to the affairs of the international tribunals, including the question of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, China has always been objective and fair, and has avoided involving its self-interest.

Based on our support for the decision of the Secretary-General, our expectations of fairness and high efficiency in the functions of the Residual Mechanism and its principals in accordance with the law, considerations with regard to the continuity of the Tribunals and the need for the Security Council to complete the appointment of the Prosecutor in a timely manner, China voted in favour of the resolution.

At the same time, China takes note of the concerns of several countries with regard to the appointment of the President of the Residual Mechanism and the nomination of the Prosecutor. We hope that those concerns will be duly considered and that the appointment and nomination of the principals of the Residual Mechanism will be more fair and transparent in future. China also hopes that the Residual Mechanism and its principals will strictly implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and execute their functions in a fair and efficient manner, so as to earn the confidence of the international community.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.